



CONGREGATION BETH YESHURUN
ANNUAL REPORT

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13 Iyyar 5781

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PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT



It is my honor and privilege to present the President's Annual Report for 2020.

Because of a Special Congregational Meeting in January 2021 to amend Beth Yeshurun's Constitution, the 2020 Annual Report is being delivered to the Board and the Congregation April 2021. As a result of the amendment, our organizational and fiscal calendars will be synchronized.

For some context, I would like to share with you an excerpt from the beginning of the 2019 Annual Report:

After being displaced, and fully returning to our spiritual home for the 2018 High Holy Days, 2019 was a year of returning to normalcy . . .

"Normalcy??" 2020 challenged everything we know about Normalcy. What is Normalcy? For the synagogue's history books, will 2020 go down as the year of the Corona-virus Pandemic Shutdown, the year of Quarantine, the year of defining the "New Normal?" Will it be remembered for moments and events that were missed or the opportunities that were taken?

I declare that it shall be recorded that 2020 was a year that a large institution, steeped in centuries of tradition and teachings, with numerous and diverse congregants, adapted and metamorphosized, with agility, creativity, and technology – to continue its mission of supporting a learning, spiritual and caring Jewish Community. 2020 was a year of adaptation – not cancellation.

While the whole world was thrown into this "New Normal" in 2020, Congregation Beth Yeshurun is different – religious institutions are different. Prior to the pandemic, many people had at least some experience with shopping online, video chatting with the grandkids, streaming movies, ordering take-out, working from home. Yes, everything was different, but for a synagogue, a place whose main purpose is for people to congregate, socialize, be together, pray together, share simchas together, mourn together – the idea of not being able to congregate COULD cause paralysis.

But it did not. For the reasons outlined below and contained in the committee reports, I believe the history books should record 2020 as the year when Congregation Beth Yeshurun demonstrated its ability to be nimble and reactive when the situation arose, but deliberate and well thought out for the long-term in its exodus from the Corona-virus Pandemic.

Because of the forethought of the synagogue leaders before me, the technology was in place which allowed us to move most of our operations online – from High Holy Day services to daily minyans, Friday evening services, Shabbat Services, 100 Jewish Men, Lunch and Learns with the clergy, special guest speakers, and funerals. Because of technology and a willingness to adapt, we were able to bring congregants in virtually to participate in services such as reading the Megillah or Haf-Torah. Because of our talented staff, led by Executive Director Andy Burger, Program Director Jennifer Rosenzweig, and Communications Manager Ashley Mills, we were able to make all of this happen, while assisting our congregants with their technological needs to remain connected to their community. Because of our

able, dedicated and learned clergy, led by Senior Rabbi Brian Strauss and Cantor Meir Finkelstein, we were able to remain connected and minister to our community's spiritual needs during a year with many demands.

While B'nai Mitzvah were a challenge, our B'nai Mitzvah Coordinator Sara Ellen Kaiser, committee chair Susan Sandler, clergy and tutors worked with some of the most gracious and dedicated families regarding scheduling and limitations to allow for many safe B'nai Mitzvah to take place during 2020.

Our Religious School under our Education Director, Sheryl Eskowitz, and committee chair, Bill Schwartz, adapted to be able to continue providing online classes, resuming in-person when it was safe to do so.

The Barg Sanctuary was transformed into BYTV, by Mouthwatering Media, to provide a professionally produced High Holy Days experience when we could not have congregants in the building, thanks to Nancy and Arthur Brand and family and Gilda and Warren Sprung and family. Our services were viewed by over 13,000 individual devices from around the world.

Our Catering Department, led by Eileen Pettigrew, possibly affected the most by the situation of the year – as food service as an industry was widely and dramatically affected – provided thousands of meals to go and Passover Seder meals.

A group of congregant volunteers, led by Jonathan Baliff and our Director of Member Relations, Mindi Stern, launched the Chesed Committee to reach out to our elderly congregants during the year to check-in and provide any assistance needed, including water needs during the Historic Winter Storm in February 2021.

On March 25, 2021, Congregation Beth Yeshurun was awarded a 2020 Good Brick Award from the Historical Society for the restoration of our Historical Landmark. Thank you to Glen Rosenbaum and all involved in the entire process from restoration to accreditation.

Two financial high notes of 2020 are the sale of the property known as Pitts Road, which the synagogue was gifted in 1960; and the receipt of a significant portion of the reimbursement funds from FEMA related to the Hurricane Harvey remediation and restoration. And under Jon Feiwell, the chair of the Budget Committee, we are presenting a balanced budget to the congregation for 2021-2022 with the assistance of our executive staff, including our Controller, Nicole DeLoach.

On the development front, under the leadership of Director of Development, Jennifer Sutton, a plan was developed and is already in execution to enhance the Fein Atrium with museum cabinetry and items from the Mollie and Louis Kaplan Museum Collection in collaboration with the Museum Committee under the leadership of Daniel Musher, with the cabinets sponsored by donors. We also resumed the Legacy Foundation Campaign with a wonderful online concert in early 2021.

Congregation Beth Yeshurun is undertaking strategic planning to be completed within the next 12-18 months, which will provide the board, clergy, and executive staff a long-term plan for Beth Yeshurun as we define what "Normalcy" is for Beth Yeshurun based on our congregants' advice and input. What have we learned? How have we changed? How does everything fit within our tradition, customs, mission, and unique congregation? How will we lead the Conservative Movement?

Three years ago, searching for a new Executive Director, I received a call from our then President, Andy Burger, who asked if I would start my term early if he threw his hat in the ring for Executive Director. I

answered that call. Meaning that my term started with a new President, new Executive Director, and new Senior Rabbi.

When I was asked if I would serve an additional 6 months after my term because of the calendar change in the Constitution, I answered that call.

But the call answered was the call instilled in me by the teachers at the Beth Yeshurun Day School and Hillel High, Rabbi Segal on my Bar Mitzvah on this very bimah reminding me that my Bar Mitzvah was the beginning of my Jewish journey, not the end, Rabbi Rosen under the chuppah with me and my bride and the Jewish family that would someday grow, my parents for showing me the importance of Judaism and being part of the community and leadership.

It has been an honor to serve as the President of this historic landmark. I am a better person and Jew for having done it. I believe I have served the institution well and honorably in furtherance of its missions, and leave it in a better place, physically, spiritually, and financially than when I took office, advancing what those before me had set in place.

There is no one I feel more comfortable turning the reins over to than our next Congregational President, David Stein. I don't know anyone who cares more about the institution of Beth Yeshurun or everyone who comprises it. From members to staff, David cares deeply about every one's needs and point of view. He possesses the compassion and passion for the position, the business acumen for the current situation and the vision to lead us forward.

In closing, I offer my sincere appreciation to all of those who have supported me and the synagogue over the past year.

To the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee and Past-Presidents for their outstanding dedication and commitment of time and skills.

To our clergy and staff who rose to every challenge I faced, whose hard work, commitment, passion, and caring is Beth Yeshurun. Thank you to our donors who have been so generous in support of the synagogue during difficult times. Thank you to all our committee chairs and volunteers. And thank you to the Beth Yeshurun Sisterhood for their support of the synagogue and its operations. Without you, the synagogue would not be able to function.

Thank you to the Congregation for your trust in me with what we hold sacred. I never lost sight of that. Your support of Beth Yeshurun and Judaism is what makes the Houston Jewish community a special and unique community.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Sara, and my daughters, Amanda, and Rebecca. I became involved in the synagogue to set an example for my daughters about the importance of synagogue life. Only time will tell if I succeeded. But in the meantime, they set an example for me of support and encouragement. I am profoundly grateful for my family's love and support throughout this endeavor.

Respectfully submitted,



Jerrad D. Bloome, President

CONGREGATION BETH YESHURUN
ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES
January 26, 2020

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held in the Stein Hall on Sunday, January 26, 2020. Andrew Toubin was the Master of Ceremonies. After welcoming everyone, the officers, clergy, and staff of the Congregation, were introduced. Cantor Meir Finkelstein led the singing of Hatikvah and the Star-Spangled Banner, and Rabbi Steve Morgen gave the invocation.

President Jerrad Bloome called the business meeting to order at 10:43 am.

A motion to approve the minutes of the 2019 meeting was made by Mark Newman, seconded by Sandy Herskovitz, and approved by acclamation, without dissent.

A motion to ratify all the actions of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee during the past year was made by Marty Peskin, seconded by Susan Bloome, and approved by acclamation, without dissent.

There was no unfinished business or new business.

Jerrad called on Past President Arlene Staller, Chair of the Nominations Committee, who presented the Nominations Committee report. Arlene explained the nominations procedure and thanked the members of the Nominations Committee: Steve Finkelman, Linda Katz Brandt, Diane Lee Kraitman, Susan Pillar, William Schwartz, and Hershel Swartz.

Arlene introduced and thanked the following individuals who were elected to the Board of Trustees in 2018 to their second two-year term, 2018-2019, and were not eligible for re-election: Robert Bresalier, Jennifer Deutsch, Sammy Fleschler, Linda Brandt, Michael Hofrichter, Ryan Kagan, Robert Lane, Yahya Moussazadeh, Polina Strug, and Andrew Toubin. Jerrad also thanked Cindy Anapolsky, Cindy Kaplan, Grant Marblestone, David Wolf, and Syma Levy who had chosen not to continue as board members.

The members of the Senior Advisory Board were thanked for their service to the Congregation: Nir Grossman, Richard Kammerman, Daniel Musher, Susan Sandler, William (Bill) Schwartz, and Lee Wunsch.

To fill the available positions on the Board of Trustees, the following qualified names were submitted for the two-year term, 2020-2021: Jonathan Baliff, Marjorie (Margie Fields), Anna Guerra, Herb Kalman, William (Bill) Schwartz, Herschel Swartz, and Lee Wunsch. There were no nominations from the floor. The nominees were elected by acclamation.

The following members of the Board of Trustees were elected in 2019 to their first two-year term, 2019 - 2020, to be completed at the end of 2020: Brian Goldfarb, Julie Kaplan, Micah Kessler, Rebecca Luks, Mark Newman, and Jessica Samet.

The following members of the Board of Trustees were elected in 2018 to their first two-year term, 2018 – 2019, and were nominated for re-election to serve a second two-year term, 2020-2021: Emanuel Bodner, Samantha Melman, Marty Peskin, Lindsay Tavor, Bonnie Winnograd, and Rachel Zuckman. The nominees were elected by acclamation.

The following members of the Board of Trustees were elected in 2019 to their second two-year term, 2019-2020, to be completed at the end of 2020: Melissa Brams, Jon Feiwell, Robyn Shkolnik Z"L, and Sherry Stoger.

Auxiliary representatives to the Board of Trustees were introduced:

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Brotherhood: | Michael Wiesenthal |
| J.B. Greenfield Chapel | Jack Uzick |
| Museum Minyan | Elizabeth Vincent |
| Sisterhood: | Barbara Koslov |

Rabbi Brian Strauss installed the members of the Board of Trustees.

Arlene Staller made the following nominations for officers:

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| President: | Jerrad Bloome |
| President-Elect: | David Stein |
| Vice-Presidents: | Cary Hoffman |
| | Arthur Nathan |
| | Lori Herzog |
| Secretary | Roni Most |
| Treasurer: | Jeff Lefkowitz |

The new Board of Trustees, including Past Presidents, met in the foyer for the purpose of electing officers for the coming year. The officers elected for 2020 were:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| President: | Jerrad Bloome |
| President-Elect: | David Stein |
| Vice-Presidents: | Cary Hoffman |
| | Arthur Nathan |
| | Lori Herzog |
| Secretary | Roni Most |
| Treasurer: | Jeff Lefkowitz |
| Immediate Past President | Arlene Staller |

Rabbi Brian Strauss then installed the newly elected officers and introduced President Jerrad Bloome.

President Bloome addressed the Congregation.

Michael Bloome made a motion, seconded by David Stein to adjourn the business meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 am.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/Roni Most, Secretary

BUDGET COMMITTEE

The CBY Budget Committee meets quarterly and is comprised of a cross-section of CBY members, including past presidents, members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee, and regular members of the congregation who are interested in the synagogue's financial affairs. The committee has a chairman who is also a member of the CBY Board of Trustees, and he reports periodically to the Board of Trustees on the committee's activities. CBY executive management and staff members also attend Budget Committee meetings to support the responsibilities of the committee.

The primary responsibility of the CBY Budget Committee is the delivery of the synagogue's annual operating budget to the Board of Trustees for approval by the Board, and the monitoring of the synagogue's actual performance against that budget throughout the fiscal year. The committee is responsible for investigating significant variances between the budget and the actual financial information, and for making recommendations to the Board of Trustees for improvements or corrective actions.

In the past, the Budget Committee, or its individual members, have been called upon to undertake special projects of significance to the synagogue that are financial in nature, such as developing policies for the use of the Building Fund or the Congregation's managed funds. These policies have added consistency to our governance and added value in that they allow these funds to be used for the betterment of the synagogue or for improved services provided to our members. The Budget Committee also works with executive management in the development of controls and processes to ensure accuracy and timeliness in our financial reporting.

Toward that end, beginning with fiscal year 2020 (year ended June 30, 2020), CBY switched to the accrual basis of accounting for our internal financial statements. The accrual basis of accounting requires the recording of transactions when they occur – when revenue is *earned* or when expenses are incurred, as opposed to the cash basis of accounting which recognizes transactions when cash is received or disbursed. One of the main benefits of the accrual basis of accounting is that it provides for a better matching of revenues and expenses.

For example, under the cash basis of accounting, cash received in March from attendees for an event to be held in May is recorded as revenue in March even though the revenue has not been "earned," because the event has not been held yet. And the expenses for the event might not be invoiced to the synagogue until after the event in July, and paid in August, which would result in a delay in recording our expenses using the cash basis of accounting. One can then easily see that the March financial statements will show income for which no expense was recorded, and the July and August financial statements will contain expenses that were actually incurred in June. Please note that our fiscal year starts July 1 so we would have revenue and expenses from the same event in different fiscal year's financial statements which is an obvious distortion of our financial statements. A key advantage of the accrual basis is that it matches revenues with related expenses, so that the complete impact of a business transaction can be seen within a single reporting period.

There is no denying that the past few years have been financially challenging for CBY. Like all non-Orthodox synagogues across the United States, it is a difficult to attract and retain younger members.

Many adults under the age of 35 simply no longer monetarily value a synagogue membership. To respond to this challenge, CBY has been aggressive in its membership pricing to recruit young adult members. These efforts have met with success in that our overall membership numbers have remained stable, but a larger percentage of our members than in the past are not paying dues commensurate with the true cost of membership. This concession on revenue expectations represents a vital marketing effort on the synagogue's part to maintain the inflow of younger members, the lifeblood of the synagogue in the long term.

These newer and younger members paying a lower level of dues offset older members who have passed away. Quite often, these older members were paying dues at a higher level than the newer and younger members. In this respect, we are not much different than many other synagogues in the U.S. However, there is one key thing that has uniquely impacted CBY as compared to other synagogues around the country and that is Hurricane Harvey. It has taken awhile to assess the level of damage Harvey did to our dues-paying membership base, but it is now clear we have been negatively impacted by members who have moved away from our core areas of Meyerland, Bellaire, and the surrounding communities. Members who were living in these locations were often homeowners, more financially settled, and in a better position to sustain the synagogue with their financial contributions. Their loss is felt and reflected in the synagogue's less-than-expected financial performance.

Even with the financial challenges we face, the synagogue remains financially strong and has actively pursued other sources of revenue to offset reductions in membership revenue. While membership revenue has been declining, we were still able to develop new revenue that strengthened our financial position to ensure the long-term future of CBY. The synagogue's executive and lay leadership is continuing in this effort to shift the synagogue from being almost entirely dependent on membership dues to a model that ensures other types of continuous streams of revenues to buffer the synagogue during difficult financial times.

In fact, the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022 (year ended June 30, 2022) contains an improved financial outlook for CBY as we anticipate a phased-in return to normalcy with respect to synagogue operations. We expect that with more in-building attendance and programming that the ties to the membership will be strengthened and that this can have only a positive impact on our financial performance. Challenges remain and will be addressed as needed, but the synagogue is in a strong position to meet those challenges. Synagogue leadership and management is conscious that we are spending member contributions to operate the synagogue and the Budget Committee will continue doing its part in the effort to ensure the financial well-being of CBY in the future.

The CBY Budget Committee welcomes any member who would like to join the committee and serve the largest Conservative congregation in the United States. You do not need to be an accountant or a financial expert as our committee has members from many different professions.

/s/Jon D. Feiwell

Chairman, CBY Budget Committee

Congregation Beth Yeshurun
Income Statement
June 30, 2020

| | Actual June 30, 2020 | Budget June 30, 2020 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Revenues | | |
| Dues | \$3,503,778.83 | \$3,638,008.00 |
| Pledges | \$14,739.11 | \$0.00 |
| Contributions and Bequests | \$473,674.02 | \$238,600.00 |
| Food Service and Building Use | \$371,150.43 | \$589,317.00 |
| Rental Income | \$720,000.00 | \$720,000.00 |
| Program Revenue | \$510,631.94 | \$699,286.00 |
| Investment Income, net | \$136,482.62 | \$0.00 |
| Tuition and Fees | \$217,423.22 | \$189,384.00 |
| Other Revenue | \$1,241,162.92 | \$144,977.00 |
| Total Revenue | \$7,189,043.09 | \$6,219,572.00 |
| Expenses | | |
| Synagogue Maintenance and Utilities | \$1,189,509.11 | \$1,222,027.00 |
| Activities and Annual Meeting | \$205,051.30 | \$226,873.00 |
| Programs and Projects | \$161,615.22 | \$9,500.00 |
| Food Service and Building Use | \$469,865.74 | \$561,244.00 |
| School Expenses | \$372,887.43 | \$385,165.00 |
| Day School Facilities Contribution | \$720,000.00 | \$720,000.00 |
| Other Program Expenses | \$297,427.78 | \$109,200.00 |
| Interest | \$48,111.13 | \$17,508.00 |
| General and Administrative Expenses | \$3,652,329.89 | \$2,968,055.00 |
| Total Expenses | \$7,116,797.60 | \$6,219,572.00 |
| Other Items | | |
| Realized/Unrealized Gains and Losses on Investments | \$117,554.62 | \$0.00 |
| Disaster Relief Expense and Loss on Disposal | \$8,790.40 | \$0.00 |
| Total Other Items | \$108,764.22 | \$0.00 |
| NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) | \$181,009.71 | \$0.00 |

BUILDING PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

The Building Properties Committee's function is to address the physical needs of maintaining the structures that comprise the Beth Yeshurun campus.

The committee studied and executed options to increase flood insurance for the multiple buildings that make up our campus of 140,000 square feet. We continue to explore avenues in which to mitigate against future risks.

Glen Rosenbaum and Gary Swartz spearheaded an effort to apply to the Texas Historical Commission for a Historical Designation. The THC notified the synagogue on January 25th of 2020 that the historic designation has been approved for the whole complex for Beth Yeshurun Synagogue. The historical designation allows us to place a marker on the northwest corner of our property in a ceremony that is scheduled to take place October 17, 2021. This plaque will showcase how important our facility is to our community. Preservation Houston presented the Congregation with the Good Brick Award for 2021 for restoring our landmark synagogue. Many thanks to Gary Rosenbaum and Gary Swartz for their vision and hard work.

An engineering assessment was conducted at the beginning of 2020 to determine the useful life of HVAC systems. It was determined that the current HVAC system is well beyond its useful life presenting an increased risk of failing during critical events. Therefore, at the end of 2020 the Board of Trustees approved the search and engagement of an engineering firm to design a replacement HVAC system. The design project is scheduled for completion in May of 2021. Substantial completion of a new system is currently estimated to occur in January of 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Jack Uzick, Chairman

Andy Burger, Executive Director

DEVELOPMENT

I. **Virtual High Holy Days: 2020-2021 High Holy Day Campaign**

Our High Holy Day campaign brought in over \$313,000 in pledges from congregational families and viewers across the globe. With a combined campaign which combined postal mail, email, and an online personal request from incoming president David Stein, 20 congregational families stood together to double the amount donated to the High Holy Day Appeal up to \$150,000, thereby resulting in a 74% increase in amounts raised over the budgeted amount in much needed support of Beth Yeshurun synagogue operations and programming.

Thank you to the following members who served as matching donors to the High Holy Day Appeal:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Anonymous | Lorraine Horwitz |
| ABC Doors / The Swartz Family | Sue & Stuart Jacobson |
| Debbie & Jim Adler | Sherry Bender Levy & Ken Levy |
| Beth Yeshurun Sisterhood | Joy & Scott Plantowsky |
| Susan & Michael Bono | Paula & Irving Pozmantier |
| Marian & Gabi Braun | Glen Rosenbaum |
| Rhona & Bruce Caress | Stein Family / Triple S Steel |
| Marjorie & Clive Fields | Jill & Charlie Talisman |
| Kelli Cohen Fein & Martin Fein | Judy & Ronnie Yambra |

II. **Virtual High Holy Days: 2020-2021 Yizkor Book**

Led by Rae Uzick, the synagogue also revamped the Congregation's Yizkor book by mailing each congregant household a physical copy of the book while maintaining a current virtual copy available online on Beth Yeshurun's website. These changes were well received by the Congregation, as demonstrated by raising nearly \$60,000 in financial support for the Beth Yeshurun operations, an increase of 13.5% from the previous year.

III. **Rabbi's Circle**

This year, our Rabbi's Circle, which supports important new programs in the congregation, continued its growth trend. With 22 member families, our Rabbi's Circle brought in nearly \$100,000 to support virtual programming in the areas of worship, learning, and social activism, such as organizing groups of congregants to volunteer at S.E.A.R.C.H. and the Houston Food Bank: providing support for young adult programming as well as for young families online. The Rabbi's Circle funds also supported outdoor, drive-thru congregation-wide programs, such as Simchat Torah.

An innovative and well-received Rabbi's Circle dinner was held via Zoom to express our gratitude to the members of the Rabbi's Circle for their generous support of the synagogue. Hand-crafted charcuterie boards were created by Sandra Finkelman and filled with delicious kosher hors d'oeuvres by the Beth Yeshurun kitchen, who also personally delivered each member's charcuterie board.

IV. **Historic Legacy of Congregation Beth Yeshurun**

In 2019-2020 Congregation Beth Yeshurun was recognized as an important Texas historical landmark with the dedication marker ceremony to take place on October 17, 2021. Further, in 2021, Preservation Houston, a nonprofit which promotes the preservation and appreciation of Houston's architectural and cultural historic resources through advocacy, education and committed action, recognized the synagogue's excellence in historic preservation in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey with the *Good Brick Award*.

Congregation Beth Yeshurun also proudly announced the launch of its own *Legacy Society* to sustain our rich history, preserve our religious community and provide for the maintenance of our architecturally significant building. In recognition of the supporters of the Congregation Beth Yeshurun Legacy Society, we were excited to host Tikvah . . . Our hope for the future! an incredible virtual Spring Concert featuring globally recognized musicians and opera singers, together with our very own Cantor Meir Finkelstein, who presented a magnificent musical performance. With over 1500 views across the globe, we are especially grateful to Cindy Weinstein and Sharon Krost, who chaired this memorable evening and Glen Rosenbaum, the evening's generous underwriter.

V. **Recognizing Donors in the Fein Atrium**

Our mission is to be an inclusive synagogue that embraces the philosophy and values of Conservative Judaism by providing a spiritual community celebrating the richness and traditions of Torah, prayer, and life cycle events; a learning community enriching Jewish knowledge and experience for all ages and abilities; a caring community encouraging social interaction and Tikkun Olam in order to strengthen ourselves, our families, the Jewish people, and Eretz Yisrael.

Beth Yeshurun is at a critical juncture and because of economic issues stemming from the current pandemic, annual dues revenues are not fulfilling budgetary projections. As such, we must identify additional funding structures within our synagogue and congregation which would supplement the dollars necessary to fulfill our sacred vision and mission over the next two years. As such, we are creating a magnificent artifact wall featuring unusual and eye-catching historical Jewish artifacts from the Mollie & Louis Kaplan Museum of Judaica. This recognition tool creates an ongoing bond between the donors and the Congregation itself as it provides a beautiful new method to support the synagogue while providing an innovative way to recognize a loved one. This beautiful display ensures aesthetic continuity by utilizing the same beautiful glass and wood cases to house each artifact. Each display case may be dedicated for a 20-year term for a total cost of \$25,000 with glass dedication plaques created by Bill Meek in honor or in memory of a loved one. At this time, five cases have been reserved by private donors for a total revenue of \$125,000. We are especially grateful to Dr. Daniel Musher of the Museum Committee who has selected the artifacts for display within the exhibit and diligently supported the design efforts of this beautiful display recognizing donors.

EDUCATION (RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AND YOUTH PROGRAMS)

The 2020-2021 Beth Yeshurun Religious School programs faced a year like no other. This annual report provides a snapshot into the challenges overcome and accomplishments achieved under the leadership and strength of our Education Director, Sheryl Eskowitz. Without her, and the unending behind the scenes support team of Shari Kammerman and Sarah Goldberg, our programs would not have achieved what they did. Thank you all for juggling so many different things this year. You were all such a big part of making everything work as smoothly as it did! As the Education Committee Chair, I take great pride in leading the group and working with Sheryl. We owe her a huge debt of gratitude, which no words can express. And ***Thank You*** for creating this report!

Our Religious Schools and programming provide opportunities for students to maintain lasting connections to the synagogue and clergy while also forming a sense of community. Students can cultivate positive Jewish memories and friendships. With Sheryl Eskowitz as the Education Director, she surrounds the children with a quality education. We thank our terrific teachers and administration for bringing strong devotion and commitment to their roles. The teachers inspire students while learning and enjoying Judaism.

The Religious School, Sulam, and Kehillah High faced enormous challenges because of the pandemic and had to create entirely new formats to meet the needs of our students. We have been the only religious school program in the greater Houston area to offer in-person classes in the 2020 – 2021 school year, and we have done so safely. We can look back on the year with pride for all that has been accomplished.

Religious School and Sulam

Our Religious School (Pre-K – 6th Grade) and Sulam (7th Grade) were during a wonderful year when we had to close due to COVID-19. At the time, the students were out for spring break. During that week, Education Director Sheryl Eskowitz and Program Coordinator Sarah Goldberg created Challenge 100 which was sent out to all Religious School families with the hope that students could earn a minimum of 100 points by completing grade level activities before Passover to earn a prize. A different set of activities - Sulam Challenge – was designed for Sulam students to complete. The families who participated enjoyed the challenges, and we received lots of positive feedback on them. The Jewish Herald Voice contacted us about Challenge 100 and published it in their paper for their readers.

Rabbi Fort, Sheryl Eskowitz, and our music teachers, Dora Lee Grinberg and Marcia Sterling, worked to create a virtual Seder Experience held virtually via Zoom for Religious School students the Sunday before Passover began.

When it became apparent we would not resume meeting in-person for the remainder of the school year, the staff began meeting over Zoom. Teachers had to learn how to use Zoom and how to plan for virtual lessons. The teachers helped each other as needed. It was determined that online classes would be shorter, that grade levels would meet on Sundays for Judaic studies, and that teachers would meet with small groups of students on Wednesdays for Hebrew instruction. We ended the school year meeting on Zoom.

Summer was filled with indecision due to many unknowns. What would our program in the upcoming year look like? Would we be able to meet in-person, or would we have to be virtual? If we could meet in-person, could our classes fit into BYDS classroom configurations without adding desks or chairs? How do we market for a program we do not yet know what it will look like? How many parents would register their children? How do we meet teachers at their current levels to provide them the technological support to teach virtually along with giving them the necessary tools to create engaging virtual lessons? How do we conduct services on Sunday mornings while not gathering face-to-face? How do we modify all procedures previously used for planning, attendance, and teachers signing in and getting their materials? How do we handle having supplies for each student as opposed to class supplies? How do we hire teachers when we do not know the number of students or what the program would look like? Throughout the summer we came up with plans, talked with parents and teachers, and continually changed plans due to the ever-changing information. There were several virtual workshops available to assist teachers with a variety of needs, and we guided teachers toward appropriate sessions based on their knowledge. Ideas and plans were discussed with the Education Committee during the summer and throughout the year.

We extended registration dates to give parents time to decide about registering, and we later sent out a detailed plan for the upcoming year. In late July we asked parents to commit to whether their children would attend in-person once we could safely do so, or whether they wanted their children to remain attending virtually through winter break. Teachers were hired based on those commitments, and it was determined that there would be separate teachers for in-person teaching and virtual teaching.

Once we felt we could safely meet in-person, there was a huge amount of work to make it happen. New procedures were created for practically everything, and laptops, projectors, carts, student supplies, and supply bags were ordered. We worked closely with BYDS administration to understand how their classrooms would be set up and the number of student desks and chairs in each room, how bathrooms would be designated for certain grades, and how they were handling some procedures so that the two schools' policies would be coordinated. We worked with maintenance to make sure school classrooms and common areas could be thoroughly sanitized between BYDS and Religious School's use, with extra consideration given to Wednesdays when Religious School students arrive shortly after BYDS dismissal. We established a medical advisory team who helped Sheryl establish some guidelines to be used once we were in-person and offered suggestions for communicating them to parents and staff. Our thanks go to Dr. Ryan Kagan, Dr. Brian Goldfarb, and Dr. Matt Wigder, who have continually offered their advice and guidance throughout the year. There were numerous virtual staff meetings as we shared plans with teachers and answered their questions.

We also met with the *madrichim* (our teen assistants) virtually to talk about procedures and how they could help the teachers. They talked with their parents and notified us of their preference to work in-person or virtual.

In late August we held an all-school virtual supply pickup, so everyone had books and supplies needed to start school virtually. We began the year with the hope we would be able to start in-person shortly after Simchat Torah. Services (one for Pre-K – 2nd grade and another for 3rd – 6th grades) were prerecorded weekly and available for families to access on the website. Our beginning of the year online format was similar to the past spring, and students and teachers were happy to see each other.

Rabbi Strauss encouraged us to have an outside celebration on the morning of Simchat Torah, and it was wonderful having a small group of students, with each child accompanied by only one parent, come together in-person! We had many families who chose to watch from home.

We decided to start meeting in-person at the end of October with about 1/3 of our students staying virtual. While parents have had the option to switch from virtual to in-person or vice versa at different points in the year, it has basically remained the same split throughout the year. Once we started in-person, we had two tracks within the school with different structures, times, and communications for those teachers, students, and parents. Sheryl Eskowitz and Shari Kammerman soon learned there was a totally different rhythm to the weeks in the Religious School Office from previous years to make sure everything was ready for those in-person while making sure everything was ready for those who were virtual. Juggling both has been a challenge.

One of the things that had to be in place prior to starting in-person was creating a phone-friendly check-in program for our staff, parents, and *madrichim* to complete daily and show the green check to enter upon arrival. We are grateful to Michael Hofrichter, who spent hours creating the program for us.

At the beginning, the in-person teachers, parents, and students had to get used to many new procedures - with online check-ins being done before entering the building, parents not being allowed in the building, changes in drop-off and carpool pick-up, adjusting the arrival times slightly - but after a few weeks, the routines felt more comfortable. The teachers and parents of in-person students were great about notifying the Religious School Office if someone was not feeling 100% or if the teachers or students had been asked to quarantine. Teachers sometimes quickly went from teaching in-person to teaching virtually if they could not come into the building.

The virtual parents had to get used to the supply pickups that were held once every 5-6 weeks throughout the year, the Zoom schedules, and initially some unexpected staffing changes.

We have continued to pre-record services every week with those in-person watching services using the new laptops and projectors purchased. The virtual students can watch services from home as well. Many thanks to Rabbi Fort, who recorded the Pre-K – 2nd grade services with Sheryl Eskowitz each week, and to Cantor Dorf, who recorded the 3rd – 6th grade services each week and was sometimes joined by Rabbi Morgen.

Programs have been changed and reimagined. We have had many programs virtually with the students connecting from their classrooms and from their homes - visits with our ISJL Education Fellow, visits with our rabbis, a Purim puppet show for the younger students, a family education program for our 6th graders and their parents to create personalized yads, a tour with Holocaust Museum Houston, and a Seder Experience led by Rabbi Morgen and Cantor Dorf. Our Kindergarten Consecration will be held virtually just before Shavuot.

ISRAEL-A-PALOOZA was totally reimagined with the first part totally virtual for students and parents; we partnered with three Israeli-based companies for engaging grade-level appropriate activities. The morning will conclude with a fun drive through event. Once again, this program is generously sponsored by Joyce and Arthur Dauber.

Our Religious School has met in-person from late October through now, and we are the only religious school program in the greater Houston area that has had in-person classes at all during this year. We have not had any problems with COVID-19 transmission, and we only had to have two classes go virtual for one day each when a teacher was not able to come into the building and we did not have a sub available. We are very proud of all that has been accomplished this year, and we look forward to having everyone together in-person in the upcoming school year.

Kehillah High

Kehillah High met virtually throughout the year. Kehillah High Director Danielle Alexander created as many different opportunities for the teens throughout the year as possible. While we know our teens missed being together in-person, the teens attended regularly during the year. There were also some advantages to meeting virtually. Danielle was able to work with teachers and organizations outside of Houston to teach virtual classes and offer special programs. In addition, teens who live too far away to attend Kehillah High in-person on Wednesday evenings could attend classes virtually. Kehillah High's inaugural trip to Israel for incoming juniors and seniors is scheduled for this June, and we hope the trip will not have to be postponed again due to COVID. A decision will be made at the beginning of May.

Youth Programming

Throughout the year, we have had some virtual opportunities for our children and teens to participate in. Sarah Goldberg has provided holiday-related opportunities for our children to engage in Judaism in fun and creative ways with the Bitmoji Bimah before the High Holy Days and Sukkot, the Hanukkah Bitmoji Adventure, and the *Escape from Egypt* challenge before Passover. Sarah also created an online High Holy Days journal for teens with daily prompts for the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Kevin Lefkowitz recorded sermons for the teens for both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that were posted on Beth Yeshurun's website. We look forward to having in-person activities for our pre-teens and teens in the upcoming year.

Beth Yeshurun was an active participant in the Houston Jewish Teens Global Shabbat held just before Hanukkah. Sarah Goldberg and several Beth Yeshurun teens were on the steering committee.

We have had an incredible group of 16 teens work in the Religious School this year - some in-person and some virtually - as *madrichim*. All teens participating in this program are continuing their own Jewish education - either at Kehillah High, Emery Weiner, or Beren Academy. Their commitment and technology knowledge have been a huge help during this unique time.

Finally, I would like to thank all our members of our Education Committee for their ideas, dedication, support, and energy as they contribute to the quality Jewish education and programs our students receive. The youth of our synagogue community is blessed with our programs, and I look forward to watching the continued growth and development of them.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Schwartz, Chair

HIGH HOLY DAY COMMITTEE

The 2020 High Holy Day services were not like any service in Beth Yeshurun's history. We all participated in the High Holy Day services at home in front of our television and computer screens. Through You Tube and Livestream, the rabbi's and cantor spiritually guided us through incredibly produced High Holy Day services, that reached family, friends, and congregants all over the world. The clergy, staff, and Chesed Committee were devoted to making sure all members had a virtual or physical prayer book and were available for online assistance constantly. It was so important that each person felt spiritually connected to the services.

As 2021 High Holy Days approach, we are already discussing how to best prepare the synagogue and services for the upcoming Holy Days.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lori Herzog, Chair

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

The year 2020 was like no other for the world and Congregation Beth Yeshurun. With people on lockdown and in person meetings canceled, the CBY Investment Committee was forced to meet via ZOOM to continue to monitor the synagogue's investments. The committee did not miss a beat as it was seamlessly able to hold its quarterly meetings with Avalon Advisors for reviews and oversight of the portfolio.

2020 will be remembered by most investors for the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Global stocks suffered one of the quickest declines on record, but broadly recovered and hit new highs by year-end. 2020 was the fastest bear market ever. Although it was only a one-month-long bear market, the S&P 500 Index fell 33.9% from the February 19, 2020 peak until the March 23, 2020 low. Along the way, it set the record for the fastest 20% bear market ever (only 16 days, topping the previous record from 1929). At the lows in 2020, the S&P 500 was down 30.7% for the year, but when all was said and done, it closed up **16.3%**. This was the first year in history stocks were down 30% at one point during the year and finished the year in the green. Most asset classes fared well in 2020 including a strong 28% rise in gold and bonds (as measured by the Barclays Aggregate Bond Index) posted a 5% gain.

The CBY portfolio achieved a return of almost **12%** for 2020. The overall portfolio continues to be invested consistent with a strategic asset allocation of roughly 65% equities and 35% fixed income. With the federal reserve slashing interest rates to close to zero due to the pandemic, the margin loan rate offered to CBY went down and stayed at 1%. CBY has maintained a margin balance taking advantage of the low interest rate offered and the loan to value ratio remains at a manageable 13%. Respectfully,

Marty Peskin, Chairman, Investment Committee

Investment Committee Members:

Steve Finkelman, Susan Gumbiner, Sanford Herskovitz, Stuart Jacobson, Carolyn Karp, Robert Lane, Rachel Lootens, Steven Sheldon, Andrew Toubin

KAPLAN MUSEUM COMMITTEE

The annual speaker in 2020 was Dr. Daniel Musher. The lecture entitled "These are a few of my favorite things!" dealt with some of Dr. Musher's favorite objects in the collection. Ori Soltes, a brilliant scholar, and great speaker is scheduled to give a Zoom lecture on May 2, 2021. His subject will be "What is Jewish Art, from Rembrandt to Shalom of Safed." He will discuss important acquisitions by the Museum in 2021, including the five signed Chagall etchings, The Rembrandt etching, "Triumph of Mordecai (<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/373047>) and a watercolor by Shalom of Safed. He is one of the best qualified scholars in the country to address this issue.

A modest number of groups requested tours; we wish that more organizations and schools in the community would do so. A mailing sent to the heads of Judaic studies of all Day Schools in town elicited a minimal response.

The following items were added to the collection in 2020:

- Kiddush cup, Russian, c. 1890 estate of Ilene Rosenfield Robinson
- Kiddush cup, Russia, 1873, estate of Ilene Rosenfield Robinson
- Kiddush cup, Russian c. 1890 estate of Ilene Rosenfield Robinson
- Marriage belt, gilded silver, turquoise and coral, Moroccan, c.1900 Barbara and Bruce Eskowitz, Wendy and Andy Bernstein and Jeffery and Teresa Kaplan in honor of Jerry Kaplan on his 90th birthday
- Sabbath 4-branched candelabrum, brass, 19th century German, members of The Great Book Club in memory of Diane Brezner
- Havdalah Spice Box (tower), silver, filigree, Russia, 188_, Joyce Greenberg in memory of Jacob Greenberg
- Ketubah, Colored ink on vellum, Corfu, 1862, Bruce Stein in honor of Gary and Tracy Stein on their 30th wedding anniversary
- Rimonim, Silver, Morocco, c. 1900, Bruce Stein in honor of David Stein on becoming President of Congregation Beth Yeshurun 2021

The rare *tzedakah* plate for the *Chevra Kadisha* of Bucharest, Rumania, silver, 1825 that was acquired in 2019 probably belongs to the Jewish community of Bucharest and was taken from that community by the Nazis. We will plan to accept the financial loss and return the plate if they still have a functioning *Chevra Kadisha* or a Judaica Museum.

The Committee has been relatively inactive, there having been no agenda items suggested and no specific items needing decisions.

Daniel Musher, Chair

Carol Emery, Co-Chair

Administrative Staff: Lisa Unsell

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee is charged with recommending membership policies and the recruitment of new and retention of existing individual and family memberships. Toward that end, the Membership Committee performs many functions, including:

- * Welcoming new members
- * Establishing levels of annual contributions from members
- * Assisting congregants with their requests for adjustments to their levels of annual giving
- * Monitoring and applying suspensions and resignations
- * Administering High Holy Day admission and ticketing procedures
- * In-reach and Outreach Programming

This year we faced an unprecedented health crisis and an uncertain economy affecting our community. It has been a time of adjustment for both the members and the staff. We met these challenges with proactive in-reach, compassion, and opening our (virtual) doors to our members and greater community:

Proactive In-Reach

- The Chesed Committee
 - Created and Chaired by Jonathan Baliff, this program centers around our most vulnerable demographic - our senior community. The initial initiative was for volunteers to make a simple phone check-in to see how our seniors were coping under the stress of Covid-19 social isolation and if any needs could be met by the congregation. Response from the seniors was overwhelmingly positive and calls have been continuing a regular basis. Winter storm checkups were especially appreciated. Thank you to all our volunteers for your continued participation.
 - Volunteers facilitated High Holy Days mahzorim drop off and pick up to senior living facilities and homebound seniors.
 - A virtual Hanukkah program was produced with songs by Cantor Finkelstein and a Q&A moderated by Jonathan Baliff and Lori Herzog, with Jerrad Bloome and Rabbi Brian Strauss discussing the "state of the synagogue" with emphasis on our senior community,
 - Held a water drive to benefit BY and the greater community post winter storm.
- CBY Socials baby-boomer program will resume when CDC guidelines approve social gatherings.
- We added an annual New Member Oneg and Open House to the synagogue calendar.

Compassion

- We strive in all our dealings with our members to be respectful, helpful, and caring, to treat all membership issues with the highest regard for member privacy and confidentiality.

Opening Our (Virtual) Doors

- We coordinated with the Texas Army National Guard last spring when they were stationed in Houston overseeing the initial virus test sites to become their primary source of virtual Jewish worship. As the Chaplain said, "...an integral part of the spiritual fitness of the unit,"
- All new members receive a personal welcome call from our clergy.

Currently, there are 1789 families of Congregation Beth Yeshurun. Between January 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, the Membership Committee addressed:

| 45 new member families | 132 resignations | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 Introductory 360 35+ • 7 Introductory Under 35 • 7 Full • 7 Comp Conversion • 1 Comp Newlywed • 7 Dual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 Deceased • 24 Moved • 1 Health • 1 Trial for a Year • 28 Lost Interest • 4 Financial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Changed Synagogue • 2 Database Cleanup • 25 Suspended • 3 "Taking a Break" • 4 COVID-19 • 1 No Contact • 3 Too Far to Drive |

We thank the committee for their dedication and due diligence:

Jerrad Bloome (President), Ryan Kagan, Arlene Staller, Roni Most, David Wolf, Lori Herzog, Mark Newman, Andy Burger (Executive Director)

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Brams, Membership Chair
Mindi Stern, Director of Member Relations

100 JEWISH MEN

100 Jewish Men is a group of men dedicated to improving themselves and each other as men, fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, friends, and Jews. Through controversial, thought-provoking speakers and small group discussions, we will explore what usually remains unspoken in men's lives at work and at home.

Thank you to our Steering Committee!

Wayne Arzt, Reid Friedman, Eric Gibbs, Nir Grossman, Benny Herzog, Ryan Kagan, Paul Katz, Mark Newman, Marty Peskin, Michael Schwartzberg, Bill Schwartz, Jerry Selzer, Jeremy Sorkin, and Michael Wiesenthal.

We have had an incredible program year so far. Over 100 men have signed up this year. So far, we have enjoyed programs with:

- Lydia Musher - Extraordinary Educator
- John Connelly - NASA Artemis Program Team
- Andrew Friedberg - Mayor of Bellaire
- Chandler Rome - Astros beat writer
- Kari Saratovsky - CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston

- Dr. Joshua Furman - Founding Director and Curator, Houston Jewish History Archive; Adjunct Lecturer
- Steven Sheldon - Writer

We look forward to our May program with Linda Kass, Author of *A Ritchie Boy: A Novel*.

Respectfully submitted –

Paul Katz
Michael Wiesenthal
Rabbi Brian Strauss

SECURITY COMMITTEE

The Security Committee continues to monitor the overall security situation for Congregation Beth Yeshurun and the Beth Yeshurun Day School. We remain vigilant in our efforts to ensure that our campus is secure and monitored. We work closely with the Bellaire Police Department and want to thank them and Detective Gil Macedo for their ongoing support. This was another unique and difficult year for the Congregation.

In 2019, we contacted an office within Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that provides security assessments to non-profit organizations. A task force of representatives from the DHS, Houston Police Department, and Bellaire Police Department performed a site assessment of our security infrastructure and procedures. We received a written report in 2020 assessing our strengths and areas for improvement. Several improvements have been undertaken to address specific items, such as improving our video surveillance monitoring, upgrading our access security system, and installing barriers to prevent speeding vehicle attack.

Executive Director Andy Burger has applied for and secured grants from the Department of Homeland Security to harden our security infrastructure. Our exterior monitoring system is still being upgraded to respond to damage which occurred during or because of Hurricane Harvey. Existing equipment such as cameras will be reused within the buildings to the extent possible. Thank you for your concern and attention to security, Andy.

The closure of the entire Campus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic changed our immediate security needs and our progress on improvements and upgrades. We resumed our ongoing efforts when the Campus was reopened for services and Beth Yeshurun Day School resumed classes. We continue to review and address security issues on a regular basis.

The following statement has been distributed to all members of the Congregation and summarizes our approach to Security.

Given the domestic and international events that have occurred recently, we want to assure you that safety and security is our number one priority.

We have a robust security plan in place and regularly assess our security and related procedures. We consult closely with law enforcement and take the requisite steps to keep our campus and congregants safe and secure.

You too can make our synagogue safer by remaining alert and being cognizant of exit routes. Look for packages that seem out of place, and **if you see something, say something** to our officers on duty, staff, or clergy.

Another way to take an active role in increasing awareness and readiness, is by volunteering as a greeter or usher. Become familiar with the regulars, and welcome those who are newly acquainted or visiting our synagogue for the first time. Contact Andy Burger, Executive Director, if you have questions or comments or wish to volunteer.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Sandler, Chair

Committee Members: Ralph Burdett, Michael Hofrichter, Richard Kammerman, Alan Lipman, Jay Smith, Bonnie Winograd, Stacy Shidler (BYDS representative)

Ex officio: Andy Burger, Executive Director; Jerrad Bloome, President; David Stein, President-Elect

BETH YESHURUN SISTERHOOD

The Beth Yeshurun Sisterhood is one of the largest Women's League of Conservative Judaism Sisterhoods in North America. We have over three hundred members, including both active and honorary members. We are multi-generational with members of all ages, backgrounds, interests, and professions. We pay dues to Women's League annually and are a major supporter of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) through our annual Torah Fund Campaign.

Sisterhood supports a variety of synagogue programs and events and our volunteers help connect congregational families and promote a strong synagogue community. We pride ourselves in being full partners with the clergy, staff, and the synagogue in supporting and promoting synagogue programs. Sisterhood continues to support the kitchen and all the equipment and service ware.

This past year, 2020-2021, was a unique year for Sisterhood. Much of our programming was conducted virtually, resulting in new and creative events planned for our membership. Barbara Koslov and Vicky Richker continued to serve as Co-Presidents for their third year of what was planned to be a two-year term. Sisterhood is looking forward to the coming year when many of our traditional programs will resume with in person gatherings.

Throughout the past year, Sisterhood has supported several programs and activities at the synagogue, even though much of it was virtual involvement. This support includes contributions to special virtual programs, collections for Reynolds Elementary School, making masks for the synagogue to provide visitors, providing holiday gifts for our clergy, staff, brides and grooms, and B'nai Mitzvah. Sisterhood also assembled monthly snacks for SEARCH and Kid Meals. This project is coordinated by Marsha Abramson who chaired this program for several years since its inception. Sisterhood also provided the flowers on the bimah for the High Holy Day services. Most importantly, we consider Sisterhood to be "on call" to help the synagogue when we are asked.

Sisterhood runs the beautiful synagogue Gift Shop which offers a wide selection of Judaica items and everything you need for all the Jewish holidays. While sales were not robust this past year, the Gift Shop was able to continue to work with our members and customers to provide shopping opportunities, as needed.

The following are highlights of some of the events of the past year and 4 months, January 2020 – April 2021:

Sisterhood Shabbat – January 2020. Sisterhood led the Friday night service. Kari Saratovsky, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, delivered the sermon. A lovely Oneg Shabbat Reception was provided after services with a tasty assortment of light snacks.

Sisterhood Shabbat – January 2021. This past Sisterhood Shabbat was different. Only a limited number of members could attend the service in person due to COVID restrictions. A few members attended and participated in the Shabbat service. Barbara Koslov provided the D'Var Torah. Fortunately, many members were able to enjoy Sisterhood Shabbat via the synagogue live stream.

Sisterhood Group Challah Bake – For the past several years, Sisterhood has sponsored a group Challah Bake led by Sisterhood past president Sandra Finkelman. The first Challah bake in 2020 was hosted at the synagogue and the two later Group Challah Bakes were held virtually. This is a very popular event and is always well attended, both in person and online.

Passover Workshop – The Passover Workshop for 2020 was scheduled for late March 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID. Instead, Sisterhood produced a wonderful Passover cookbook that was shared online with all members. The Cookbook was so popular that it was again shared with the membership for Passover 2021.

Honey-Less Honey Cake Project – We were not able to assemble and package over 500 bags of Millie Dean’s Honey-less Honey Cake Mix for Celebration Company to sell as we have for the past many years. A few Sisterhood members prepared all the package labels and attached those to the ingredient bags for Celebration Company to use.

Sisters in the Hut – For several years, Beth Yeshurun Sisterhood has sponsored an annual multi-synagogue Sisterhood Sukkot celebration in our beautiful Sukkah. This event was conceived and chaired for the past 4 years by Robyn Shkolnick z”l. In 2020, the beautiful painted panels prepared in previous years were hung in the Sukkah. We plan to resume our multi-Sisterhood sukkah tradition in 2021.

Torah Fund Event – The annual Sisterhood Torah Fund program was held virtually in November 2020. Once again, Sisterhood partnered with the ERJCC Book and Arts Festival in presenting guest speaker Tommy Schnurmacher, one of the festival authors. The event was chaired by Barbara Coleman and collected over \$10,000 for the Torah Fund which was forwarded to the Jewish Theological Seminary. In addition to the ERJCC Book and Arts Festival guest speaker, our own Neal Taibel, a cantorial student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, spoke about his experience. CBY Sisterhood is one of the largest contributors to the Torah Fund nationwide.

Staff Appreciation Luncheon – This past December, Sisterhood hosted a holiday staff appreciation luncheon outdoors and provided holiday gifts for each of the staff members’ children. It was a special treat to honor our wonderful synagogue staff and administrators.

Mind, Body Skills Workshop – In February 2020, Sisterhood sponsored a Mind, Body Skills workshop led by Sisterhood member Manizeh Mirza Gruber. In May 2020, Sisterhood hosted a virtual mindfulness workshop. This was a much-appreciated session to deal with the stresses related to COVID.

100 Years: Now and Then – In October, Sisterhood invited Margery Marcus to give a virtual presentation comparing 1919 to 2019/2020. Her talk was informative and entertaining and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

Dr. Edith Eva Eger – In early April 2021, during Passover, Sisterhood partnered with the synagogue to virtually host Dr. Edith Eva Eger. Dr. Eger is 93, a Holocaust survivor, psychologist, and author. She spoke about her experiences and themes included in her book, “The Choice: Embrace the Possible”. It was a truly inspirational talk, and we look forward to partnering with the synagogue for future similar programs.

Sisterhood Virtual Bingo – In mid-April 2021, Sisterhood hosted virtual bingo, offering the program free of charge to all members. The event was graciously sponsored by Rhona and Bruce Caress. A number of participants won some great prizes, and all had a lot of fun. We plan to host future bingo sessions, either virtually or in person in the coming year.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, this year was still a very active one for our Social Action Committee. We continued our action plan to create opportunities for our congregation.

We were still able to make a difference in the lives of fellow Houstonians through working and volunteering with the following organizations:

- ❖ Bethel's Heavenly Hands
- ❖ Collection Drives for Emergency Aid Coalition
- ❖ Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center - Blood Drives
- ❖ Making Monthly Snack Bags for S.E.A.R.C.H. & Lunches for Kid's Meals with CBY Sisterhood
- ❖ Pikuach Nefesh Mental Health Training
- ❖ Reynolds Elementary School

At numerous service and holiday events, we also collected food and needed supplies for Camp Impact, Houston Food Bank, SEARCH, and other worthwhile organizations.

Finally, a new Chesed Committee was organized to reach out and help the most vulnerable in our community. We thank Jonathan Bailiff and Mindi Stern for their guidance and wisdom.

The challenges that confront our greater community are daunting, yet we accept the teaching of Rabbi Tarfon in Pirkei Avot (2:16): "You are not obligated to complete the task, but neither are you free to resist from trying."

We can all do more to improve the lives of other people living in the greater Houston area. As Jews, and as a congregation, we are strong when we care for the weak; we are rich when we care for the poor; we are invulnerable when we care for the vulnerable.

In the upcoming year, please join us in helping other people who are truly in need.

Melissa Levin and Samantha Melman - Social Action chairs
Rabbi Brian Strauss

J.B. GREENFIELD CHAPEL

We continue to provide a warm and welcoming community for daily, Shabbat, Festival and High Holy Day prayers.

This past year has been exceptionally challenging in the face of COVID19 which limited attendance at our services to limited numbers. However, thanks to our streaming infrastructure made possible with the generosity of Nancy and Arthur Brand and family and Gilda and Warrant Sprung and family in memory of their parents A.I. and Manet Schepps and Allen Brand, we were able to simultaneously stream services over the internet. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, who sponsored the additional bandwidth to broadcast services from the Freedman-Levit Sanctuary, we were able to simultaneously livestream along with other minyanim in the synagogue.

Our gabbaim continue to provide outstanding service to the Greenfield Chapel and the many members of our congregation who participate within it. The gabbaim and others who assist them regularly welcome newcomers to the service, whether they are members or guests, coming to say Kaddish or to celebrate a happy occasion. Special thanks to all our gabbaim and others who assist us in reaching out to others in need, maintaining our services, and encouraging new participants. We express our gratitude to Richard Kammerman, Michael Lewis, Dr. Robert Arkus, Arthur Nathan, Michael Richker, Jack Uzick, Bubba Silberstein and David Stein for their time and effort on behalf of our minyan and its participants. Thanks to Bubba Silberstein and Vicky and Michael Richker for their continued assistance as evening minyan captains who go to great lengths to make sure we have many more than a minyan.

On December 26, 2020 we held our seventh annual Minyanaire Shabbat. Our Steve Rudoff Memorial Minyanaire of the Year was awarded to Barbara and Dell Coleman, long-time servants of Beth Yeshurun, who for many years have been regular attendees of the weekday evening service in the Chapel. Our gabbaim, past honorees and regular minyanaires were also recognized.

The Greenfield Chapel Shabbat morning service is still Beth Yeshurun's only service where the entire Torah is read each year instead of over three years. Michael Lewis continues as our primary Torah reader on Shabbat mornings, with others including Michael Richker, Bob Kushner, and Rabbi Horwitz frequently assisting. Rabbi Horwitz continues to serve as our weekday and Shabbat afternoon Torah reader, along with his role as primary Sanctuary Torah reader, with others occasionally participating. We also extend thanks to Dr. Shelly Rubinfeld, Barbara Coleman, Kim Siegel, and Steve Finkelman, who have provided introductions to the haftarot each Shabbat morning. Rabbi Horwitz continues to teach the Torah study group which is held Thursday evenings via Zoom.

As we begin our reentry, we hope you will find an opportunity to join us in our J.B. Greenfield Chapel and share its special feeling, along with the other services provided by our Synagogue.

Our Chapel Committee members are Dr. Robert Arkus, Norman Buchalter, Steve Finkelman, Marilyn Hassid, Richard Kammerman, Jeff Lefkowitz, Michael Lewis, Arthur Nathan, Joel Sachs, Kim Siegel, Bubba Silberstein, Morris Taibel, Stephen Tew, and Jack Uzick (with Rabbi Horwitz and Andy Burger as ex-officio members). Our thanks to all of them for their continued service!

MUSEUM MINYAN

Our Guiding Principles

The Museum Minyan was founded twenty-three years ago as an egalitarian, inclusive, traditional, family friendly, lay-led religious and cultural Jewish community.

Egalitarian

Men and women participate and lead equally.

Inclusive

Our diverse community includes parents, children, grandparents, single people, and families and partnerships of all types.

Traditional

Religious services are in Hebrew and include all traditional components.

Lay-Led

Any capable member or guest can volunteer to lead, read Torah or Haftarah, or deliver Divrei Torah.

Our principles at work

- A committee of ten members regularly takes input from members for suggested enhancements to the services. All halachic decisions are made transparently with Rabbinical consultation. We recognize Rabbi Brian Strauss as our final halachic authority. We also have had direct consultations with members of the Rabbinical Assembly. A sub-committee is responsible for organizing our services.
- The Museum Minyan is using Siddur Lev Shalom.
- With Covid-19, the Museum Minyan stopped in-person services a week after Purim 2020. After a break from meeting, the Museum Minyan began to use Zoom as a forum for Havdalah, Shabbat morning services, High Holy Day services, baby naming and shiva.
- On Shabbat morning, the Museum Minyan continued to have a vibrant number of attendees ranging from 40-60 or more depending on the week. Using Zoom allowed members, family and friends living overseas and in other parts of the country to attend. Places included England, South Africa, New Mexico, Seattle, Dallas, New Jersey, and Florida.
- This year, the Museum Minyan various members continued to lead services, chant Haftarah and give Divrei Torah. Post Bar/Bat Mitzvah also led services. During the service, a short Torah reading with alternative blessings was chanted. Pre-Bar Mitzvah age members led Ashrei and participated in the junior choir.
- Divrei Torah typically include lively discussions, providing a creative learning experience. The Museum Minyan is always encouraging members to give a D'var.
- Our "hands-on" approach to training members in synagogue skills provides a safe and challenging environment, particularly with the enthusiastic support of our more experienced members. In addition, our post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah members continue to lead.

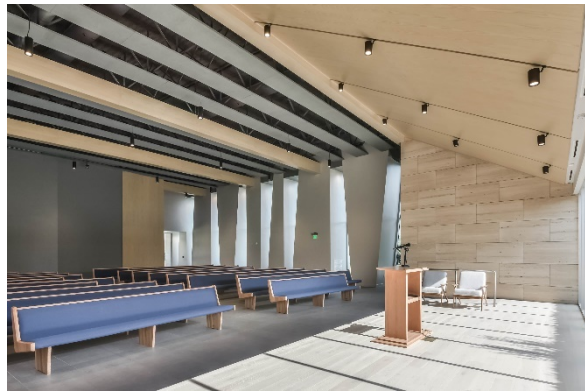
- Our Purim Megillah reading was enthusiastically led by our members of all ages. Even on Zoom members dressed up to get into the spirit of the holiday. People brought their own hamantashen.
- Shabbat Shalom is a program for young children which unfortunately was put on hold during the pandemic, and we look forward to when the children can be back together to celebrate Shabbat together.
- The Museum Minyan holds a weekly Havdalah on Zoom. To enhance the Shabbat experience, prior to Havdalah members are meeting to study the Psalms. Discussions are open and people share their thoughts, questions, and commentary.
- The Museum Minyan has conducted outreach to students in the Introduction to Judaism class. Students are invited to attend services and Shabbat events. Several students have attended.
- The Museum Minyan conducted our own services for High Holy Days via Zoom. A small group of members were in Reiches to read directly from the Torah. Leaders were in Reiches and in their homes.
- Museum Minyan members continued celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, births, other milestones and simchas together. A pandemic did not stop our community from having two baby namings.
- Even during a pandemic, the Museum Minyan celebrated two Bar Mitzvahs. Miles Berins celebrated his first and Daniel Musher celebrated his second Bar Mitzvah.
- The community still came together to support members for shiva.
- The Museum Minyan is represented on the Board.

The Museum Minyan looks forward to more successes in the future, including bringing more members to the Beth Yeshurun community. Thank you again for the opportunity to review our year.

Bernice Helbrunn
 Carol Emery
 Daniel Bissonnet
 Daniel Musher
 Hannah Hofrichter
 Liz Vincent
 Michael Hofrichter
 Tobi Cooper
 Joshua Utay
 Caryn Tamber-Rosenau

BETH YESHURUN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

Despite the pandemic throughout most of 2020, construction of the Sophia and Jack Bender Memorial Chapel was able to move forward at our Post Oak Cemetery. The chapel was completed and a dedication ceremony was held on August 16, 2020. The chapel is available for all funerals held at the Post Oak Cemetery, and to date over 20 funerals have been held in the chapel. To provide for the safety of all attendees, only 30 guests can attend funerals in the chapel with masks and social distancing required at this time. These restrictions will be revised as conditions in the community improve to allow the full capacity of 210 people.



The Beth Yeshurun Cemetery Association is extremely grateful to the children of Sophia and Jack Bender and their spouses - Sherry and Ken Levy, Susie and Scott Bender, and Lisa and Joel Bender - for their generosity in making this chapel a reality for the benefit of our community.

The chapel is air-conditioned to provide comfort against the heat of summer, the cold of the winter, and provides shelter from the sun or rain. It is accessible for wheelchairs or walkers. There is a family room where family members may gather privately before entering the chapel for the funeral service. The chapel is equipped with streaming video. All funerals are broadcast live and are also recorded. There are restrooms which are accessible from inside the chapel. The restrooms are also accessible from outside the chapel even when no funerals are taking place.

A Bender Memorial Chapel Fund has been established to allow congregants to contribute to the ongoing operation cost of the chapel. The fund is listed on the Beth Yeshurun website. We encourage members to consider donations to the fund for *yahrzeits* or other occasions.

Effective January 1, 2021 the Cemetery Association made some important rules changes with respect to the sale and use of grave sites at the cemeteries.

- Only members of Beth Yeshurun may purchase gravesites at the cemeteries.
- Only the purchasers or their first-degree relatives by blood or marriage may be buried in the graves purchased.
- To retain the right to the purchased gravesites, the purchasers must remain members of Beth Yeshurun.

These changes reflect that the land available in our cemeteries is limited, and the first priority of the

Cemetery Association is to serve the needs of the members of Beth Yeshurun. With these changes, space should be available at the Post Oak cemetery for many decades to come.

We currently have good availability of gravesites at Post Oak Cemetery, and a very limited number of single graves available at Allen Parkway Cemetery. We encourage our members to contact us to select sites before the need arises.

Forrest "Woody" Fox
Chairman

Dr. Steven R. Epstein
Barbara Golub
Paul Katz
Allan L. Margolin
Jerrold M. Paine
Lionel M. Schooler
Marlene Rosenthal
Daniel S. Trachtenberg
Jerrad Bloome, Ex Officio
Andy Burger, Ex Officio
Arthur R. Miller, Cemeteries Manager

MOVING FORWARD

Dear Congregation Beth Yeshurun Member,

We are thankful to be emerging from the Covid-19 Pandemic. Over the past year, through the leadership of our past-President Jerrad Bloome, our Executive Director Andy Burger, Education Director Sheryl Eskowitz, and our outstanding staff, we have created a multitude of outdoor and virtual programs, services, and experiences. We have stayed connected through holiday drive-thru programs, online classes and Scholars in Residence, social action drives, family programs, BYDS and religious school classes, and virtual Shabbat and High Holy Day Services with limited attendance. We will take the best of what we have done virtually and apply those lessons for years to come. Fortunately, we learned that we can still achieve some of our goals even when we cannot all be together in person.

Nevertheless, we are looking forward to having our community together again in person. Our medical advisers have given us the green light to open even more. Shabbat and weekday services are now open for all our members. You only need to register for our popular Friday night Shabbat Renewal Service. We are currently having Oneg Shabbats and Kiddush lunches in our Sukkah courtyard. However, we expect to move those inside soon. Complete B'nai Mitzvah and other life cycle events have resumed. Your clergy are available to meet with you in person. As we plan our calendar for the new program year this fall, we expect to have our classes, programs, and synagogue experiences in person again.

We know it will take some time for everyone to feel comfortable to return. Please know that we feel strongly that our sanctuaries, social halls, and classrooms are safe. Our maintenance staff cleans and disinfects our entire building every night. We enforce masking and follow the latest CDC guidance on social distancing. While we cannot yet make a solid prediction on this year's High Holy Day services, please know we will make decisions based on the safety and well-being of all our members.

Finally, to keep in better contact with you, we are excited to bring back our Message synagogue newsletter. Thanks to our member Dr. Michael Kaplan, look for an updated version to hit your mailboxes in May.

A synagogue in Hebrew is a *Beit Knesset* – A House of Gathering. How nice it will be to gather with you in person. We hope to see all of you soon at Beth Yeshurun. In the meantime, please reach out to any of us with anything you may need. We look forward to a year of gratitude, Jewish growth, and re-connection.



Rabbi Brian Strauss



David Stein

