

SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS

OCTOBER–DECEMBER, 2015



ORGANIZING FOR CSI'S FUTURE: Consultant **Rabbi Andi Berlin** (left) and congregant **Karen Zelmar** (standing) presented ideas for best practices in modern synagogue life to CSI's board and committee chairs, including **Valerie Jahan**, chair of the organizational design task force, and **Evan Kletter**, president of CSI's Board of Trustees.

A Synagogue-Federation Partnership project

BOARD REVIEWS BEST PRACTICES FOR VOLUNTEERS IN SYNAGOGUE LIFE

Good feelings that flow from good governance enhance synagogue life for everyone—clergy, staff and volunteers. With that big-picture goal in mind—enhancing synagogue life—the Sherith Israel Board of Trustees and committee chairs met in late August to look at best practices for implementing our vision for a modern, urban synagogue.

“There’s lots of good stuff going on at Sherith Israel, but we need to take it to the next level,” says immediate past president **Valerie Krieger Jahan**, who is spearheading the congregation’s organizational design initiative. “We’re active and vibrant, but we need some fine-tuning.”

To do that fine-tuning, CSI has been engaged for the past four years in the Synagogue-Federation Partnership funded by the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund. “The Synagogue-Federation Partnership enabled Federation to sup-

Synagogue Best Practices continues, page 17

Talented clergy submit resumes

INTERVIEWS CONTINUE WITH SENIOR RABBI CANDIDATES

More than a dozen rabbis from around the nation have responded to Sherith Israel’s search for a new senior rabbi. Eleven applicants were selected for preliminary interviews via Skype or, in cases of local rabbis, in person. The interviews were conducted in August and September. Two more preliminary interviews are scheduled following the High Holy Days.

Half-a-dozen candidates already have been chosen for second-round interviews.

The process has been thorough. Members of the search committee have taken their responsibility very seriously. They reviewed our synagogue application, which states what the congregation wants in a new senior rabbi. They then spent considerable time comparing it to

candidates’ resumes, weighing their rabbinic and secular experience, education and personal statements. Committee members also used synagogue websites and social media to read and view rabbis’ sermons and public addresses, and gain additional information about the synagogues they’ve served and the challenges they’ve confronted.

A basic set of questions has guided each interview. Questions range from what attracted the candidate to CSI to how they motivate and attract congregants, pursue social action, fundraise and create meaningful worship. These enable committee members to engage in wide-ranging conversations. Rabbis then take the opportunity to ask their own questions. These often refer to Sherith Israel’s

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Minyan Shabbat for Young Adults
FRIDAY, NOV. 13, 7:30 pm

Reggae Chanukah
FRIDAY, DEC. 11, 6 pm



CONGREGATION
SHERITH ISRAEL

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Member of the Union for
Reform Judaism since 1903

CLERGY

Lawrence W. Raphael
Senior Rabbi

Julie Saxe-Taller
Associate Rabbi

Jessica Zimmerman Graf
Rabbi, Director of Magalim

EMERITUS CLERGY

Martin Weiner *Rabbi Emeritus*
Martin Feldman *Cantor Emeritus*

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SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS

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A MOMENT WITH RABBI JESSICA ZIMMERMAN GRAF



LET'S DISAGREE BETTER

Just before the High Holy Days, CSI hosted a workshop entitled, **Speaking Across Conflict: How Can We Talk About Israel When We Don't All Agree (On Anything)?** It was difficult to choose appropriate artwork for our publicity materials. At first, I settled on an interesting graphic that combined the Israeli and Palestinian flags into one joint flag, but it wasn't quite right. The workshop wasn't about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. It was really about Jews learning how to disagree with one another when talking about Israel. So I chose a new image: the Israeli flag. Seemed perfect, until it was brought to my attention that using the Israeli flag might give the impression that only certain viewpoints would be welcome in the discussion. That was the opposite of what I was trying to convey!

Some people assume that a synagogue has a particular view on Israel that all congregants are expected to share. But the Jewish community was built on—and continues to be strengthened by—our ability to disagree, debate and challenge one another. Ultimately, I chose the Israeli flag image—but added the caption, “How does this picture make you feel?” Whatever our feelings—proud, sad, defensive or defiant—the complexity of the situation has made talking about Israel a divisive issue within our homes and synagogues. As a result, many American

Jews have stopped engaging in discussions about Israel.

Maybe our silence is an effort to be less contentious. Maybe it's because we have become as apathetic as some people feared. Maybe the potential solutions all look like bad choices. Maybe we don't want to spend our energy on Israel when so many local issues demand our attention. Whatever the cause, too many American Jews have stopped talking about Israel because we don't have the skills to productively disagree with each other about tough issues.

Instead of withdrawing because the conversations are hard, it is our job to engage: engage each other; engage in dialogue and debate; engage with Israel and the future of the Jewish homeland. The plethora of views on Israel in our community must be heard and discussed. The more we learn to listen to differences of opinion, the richer the conversations will be. And the more we will be able to build lasting relationships with Israel—and each other.

We need to learn to *disagree better*. This workshop was a good first step. In this New Year, I hope we will have the courage to engage one another more fully in order to understand a broader spectrum of views and ideas. We will be stronger for it. ■

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

“Both these and these are the words of the living God but the law is in accordance with the rulings of the House of Hillel.”

— Talmud (Eruvin 13b)

Hillel and Shammai lived at the end of the first century BCE and differed in their approaches to the Law. After their deaths, the liberal followers of Hillel and the conservative followers of Shammai disagreed on some 300 matters. One Torah threatened to become

two. Then a bat kol (heavenly voice) announced that each side spoke for the sake of Heaven. While Hillel's views generally prevailed, Shammai's were respected. For this reason, the Talmud provides the opinions of both the majority and the minority. ■

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Questions for RABBI LARRY RAPHAEL

A new paradigm has emerged for synagogues across North America. It focuses on building members' relationships. We asked Rabbi Larry Raphael how this new paradigm stands vis-à-vis traditional synagogue functions.

Q. *Hasn't synagogue membership often fostered friendships?*

A: Yes, relationships have always been part of synagogue life. But this year, we're making building relationships central to everything we do. We'll put added thought into how friendships can start and grow through what we do together. We know that Jews want stimulating Shabbat and High Holy Day worship. They also want interesting classes and ways to engage in social action. Social functions matter, too. But in several recent surveys, congregants have told us that community—relationships—is most important to them.

San Francisco's demographics are also important. It has been several generations since San Francisco had anything like the Jewish neighborhoods that were common in other cities. Jews are scattered here. Many Jews are new here. Jews seeking friendships with other Jews—people with whom they can feel entirely comfortable and share religious and cultural traits—often feel isolated. The synagogue offers an accessible concentration of Jews. It becomes, in effect, a Jewish neighborhood.

Q. *What about institutions like Jewish community centers and federations?*

A: They're wonderful. But JCCs and federations focus on programs. At a JCC, you can take a class on almost any subject, Jewish or secular. At a federation, you can participate in fundraising and networking events. These are valuable but short-term. When a course or meeting or lunch is over, everyone goes home. Participants may not come back for quite some time.

The synagogue approach is long-term, for every stage of life. The synagogue serves as another home welcoming people regularly—an extended family. Congregants attend Shabbat services—which other institutions obviously don't offer—weekly. They come to classes and social-action activities, along with social functions. We welcome guests, but these events are primarily for the “family”—congregants who enter the synagogue again and again throughout the year. Synagogue programs have merit in their own right, but they also enable Jews to meet other Jews on an ongoing basis.

Q. *Do relationships—friendships—just happen in the synagogue?*

A: Yes, quite naturally and for good reason. Congregants find connections at Sherith Israel because they're constantly walking through our doors and encountering each other. Many worship regularly. They see familiar faces and greet each other. Others come to Torah Study Saturday morning week after week or prepare meals with HaMotzi each Sunday. Still others attend classes and other functions. Many congregants regularly attend more than one of these “programs” while also serving on committees or the Board of Trustees.

When people see each other frequently and share in common undertakings, relationships develop and grow. This is hard to accomplish if you take a six-week course then don't show up at the institution for another three months or more. At Sherith Israel, people really get to know each other because they come in contact so often.

Q. *How does this focus on relationships impact worship, Torah Study, classes and social justice?*

A: It strengthens all of them. People deepen their worship experience when they sit alongside friends rather than in isolation. They study more enthusiastically together because they know and respect their fellow students—and learn from them. They meet synagogue challenges with greater energy and commitment because their friends are affected. During the High Holy Days, we worshiped together, asking God to forgive our communal sins and be kind to us—the entire Jewish people. We were all connected. It would be sad if someone entered our sanctuary alone and sat alone. The service would be the same, but that individual would have little reason to come back. So we welcome new people at all our events and introduce ourselves. The relationship process begins right away. We hope that no one feels alone and everyone enjoys the opportunity to share Jewish life with others.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my tenure at Sherith Israel has been seeing so many friendships sprout and blossom as a result of shared experiences in our synagogue. These relationships have extended outside our walls as well. They make for healthy individuals and a healthy Jewish community. May we continue to build relationships one at a time, year after year. ■

AVODAH/WORSHIP

SHABBAT services

FRIDAY EVENINGS

6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat services

7:15 pm: Kiddush and oneg

Join us for services each Friday, followed by Kiddush and a friendly oneg for schmoozing, noshing and making new friends.

FAMILY SHABBAT

Second Friday of the month

6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat services followed by Kiddush, congregational dinner and potluck dessert

The second Friday of the month features our lively Family Shabbat with Religious School song leader Lior Ben-Hur and his band, Sol Tevel, followed by an informal congregational dinner and potluck dessert.

SATURDAY MORNINGS

9:15 am: Torah study

Congregants and guests are invited to study the weekly parashah (Torah portion), complete with learning from traditional and contemporary sources, all laced with lively discussion. Enjoy bagels and lox, coffee and tea.

10:30 am: Shabbat morning services

Intimate and informal, services follow the basic structure of our *Mishkan T'filah* prayerbook. All Shabbat morning services include chanting or reading from one of our Torah scrolls.

Friday, Nov. 11

MINYAN SHABBAT FOR YOUNG ADULTS (20s-40s)

Friday, Nov. 13

**7:30 pm: Shabbat Services
followed by dinner**

After beta-testing our new Minyan Shabbat for young adults this summer, we're ready to take it live. Be part of the CSI young Shabbat community under Sherith Israel's beautiful dome with Rabbis Jessica Zimmerman Graf and Julie Saxe-Taller. Kabbalat Shabbat will be followed by dinner in Newman Hall. Bring friends and a bottle of wine.

Dinner: \$18 per person. When you RSVP, let us know if you play a musical instrument.

RSVP: David Cynman, 415.346.1720, x24, or dcynman@sherithisrael.org.

Friday, Dec. 11

REGGAE SHABBAT AND CHANUKAH PARTY

Friday, Dec. 11

6 pm: Service and chanukiah lighting

7:30 pm: Dinner and dance party with Lior Ben-Hur and his band, Sol Tevel

From Jerusalem and Jamaica to Sherith Israel, let the good times roll as we celebrate the sixth night of Chanukah. Rock out to the Jewish-themed reggae rhythms of Lior Ben-Hur and his band, Sol Tevel. We'll recount the miracle of the burning oil and the Maccabees' triumph over assimilation.

Our celebratory and light-filled Shabbat service will be followed by a catered latke dinner. And remember to bring your chanukiah to join in the festive congregational candle lighting.

Dinner: \$36 for a family of four (two adults and two children under bar mitzvah age); \$18 for adults and \$8 for children.

RSVP: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

S'lichot Offers Preparation: Congregants came together on Saturday night, September 5, for the traditional S'lichot service prior to Rosh Hashanah. The evening included changing our regular colorful Torah mantles to special white ones for the High Holy Days.

1] **Greg Tolson** and **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller**, 2] **David Levin** and **Ruth Auerbach Levin**, 3] **Jacalyn Kornblatt** and **Laura Olson**.



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Join the Sherith Israel family in a storytelling-themed salute to **Rabbi Larry Raphael** as he prepares to retire after 13 years of wonderful service to our synagogue.

Friday, May 20: Early dinner for young families, Shabbat worship and festive oneg

Saturday, May 21: Special Torah Study, Shabbat worship, lunch with storytelling workshops and evening dinner/concert with **Danny Maseng** in Newman Hall

Sunday, May 22: Religious School tribute

Special guests: **Rabbi Marc Raphael**, William & Mary University; storyteller **Marilyn Price**; **Peter Novak**, vice provost and professor at USF; **Art Strimling**, founder, Roots&Branches multigenerational theater

Look for more information in the coming months.

RABBI LARRY RAPHAEL: CELEBRATING HIS STORY

Save the Date: May 20–22



HAVDALAH CONCERT WITH NAVA TEHILA FROM JERUSALEM

Join the musical prayer leaders of Nava Tehila, Jerusalem, for an evening of delight as they invite us to bless the new week with holiness and joy.

Hebrew for “beautiful praise,” Nava Tehila has become one of the Jewish world’s most innovative musical prayer communities. The ensemble is an offshoot of the Nava Tehila Congregation in Jerusalem, a liberal, egalitarian religious community, which has gained a wide reputation for its uplifting music. Rooted in Middle Eastern, Hasidic, contemporary Israeli and other “world” music, Nava Tehila’s original compositions are alternately celebratory, meditative, joyful and reflective.

Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller met the group when she went to services at the Nava Tehila congregation in Jerusalem in 2012 before the CSI congregational trip to Israel. “It was a beautiful, lively and moving service,” she says. “Soon afterwards I introduced their Oseh Shalom to our Religious School service and then during Family Shabbat. Suddenly I began to hear their version in many Jewish communities in the US. Their songs have both a depth and lightness that is hard to describe. Many are contemplative but make people want to dance at the same time.”

The ensemble includes: **Daphna Rosenberg**, vocals and guitar; **Yoel Sykes**, vocals and guitar; **Jeremy Marais**, saxophone; and **Moshe Kedem**, percussion.



Save the Date!
Saturday, Jan. 16
7:30 pm

ADULT PROGRAMS

upcoming courses & events

ADULT HEBREW Sundays

Fred Nervo

9 am: Beginning Hebrew

Hilda Isaacson

9:30 am: Beginning Hebrew

10:30 am: Continuing Beginning Hebrew

11:30 am: Advanced Beginning Hebrew

Fee: \$50 per semester, includes books; scholarships available. Information: Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.

GODSPEAK: MAKING SPACE FOR GOD IN JUDAISM

**Tuesdays, Oct. 27; Nov. 3, 10, 17,
24; Dec. 1, 7–8:30 pm**

Rabbi Larry Raphael

Jews have spoken about God in many ways over the past 3,000 years. Many modern Jews avoid speaking about God altogether. Discover a broad range of views considering what God might be, how we might come to know God and the nature of the relationships God has had and might now retain with the Jewish people and the world. See how you can determine your own personal theology within Judaism to relate more deeply to the Jewish past, present and future. Text: *Finding God*, by Rifat Sonsino and Daniel Syme—available at Amazon.com and at the first class.

Fee: \$18. Information and registration: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

MAGALIM (CIRCLES) People. Learning. Community.

Join Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf, director of Magalim, for exciting activities at CSI and around San Francisco.

LIVING JEWISH

**Three Sundays to be determined
from Oct. 25–Nov. 15**

10 am–Noon

Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf

Rabbi Graf invites people in their 20s, 30s and 40s on field trips to important institutions in Jewish life. Look for more information in your email and online.

Information: Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf, 415.346.1720, x18, or rabbigraf@sherithisrael.org.

PRIME TIME CLUB

For congregants 65 and up

In memory of Marilyn and Max Singer (lunch included)

Fridays, noon–2 pm

Oct. 9: Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, My Summer Trip to Belarus

Nov. 13: Speaker TBD

Dec. 4: Rabbi Larry Raphael, The Chanukah Dilemma

DOWNTOWN TALMUD CLASS

Rabbi Larry Raphael

Thursdays, Noon–1 pm

Oct. 8, 22; Nov. 5, 19; Dec. 3, 17

Farella Braun + Martel
Russ Bldg., 235 Montgomery, 17th fl.

Come study the Sages' approach to law and life dating back nearly two millennia and deeply meaningful today. No Talmudic knowledge necessary. Materials provided along with coffee, tea and soft drinks.

JEWISH BOOK CLUB

Mondays, 7 pm

5:45–6:45 pm

Oct. 26: *The Betrayers* by David Bezmozgis.

Discussion leader: Hilda Isaacson. An Israeli politician with impeccable political roots (a stint in the Gulag) confronts the man who betrays him while others consider the betrayals of his present life.

Nov. 23: *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot* by Trudi Alexy. Discussion leader: Helaine Weinstein. Thrilling stories of Jews who found asylum from the Holocaust in Franco's fascist Spain.

Information: Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CONVERSION

Maurice Kamins

Mondays, 6:30–8 pm

Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 21

Join seekers and individuals preparing for conversion in informal discussions of the personal and practical issues relating to conversion. Jews by choice are encouraged to attend to share their experiences. Partners, spouses and friends welcome.

Information: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

ongoing programs

CARING COMMUNITY

Assists members in times of need and joy.
Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

TORAH STUDY

Saturdays, 9:15–10:15 am

Studies weekly Torah portion. Bagels and lox.

CHICKEN SOUPERS

Sundays, 9 am

Oct. 4, Nov. 8, Dec. 6

Prepares and delivers food to people with disabilities or chronic illnesses, in cooperation with JFCS.

Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.

HAMOTZI

Prepares and delivers nutritious meals to homeless shelters every Sunday, 9:30 am–12:30 pm, except Oct. 4, Nov. 8 and Dec. 6, when HaMotzi volunteers meet from noon–3 pm. *Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.*

KOLEYNU

CONGREGATIONAL CHOIR

Sings at holidays and Shabbat services.

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Greet visitors at our front desk, answer phones or help with office tasks.
David Agam, 415.346.1720, x17, or dagam@sherithisrael.org.

This winter...

EXPLORING JEWISH BELIEFS AND PRACTICES: AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Rabbi Larry Raphael, Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf and Lisa Erdberg

Sundays, 10 am–Noon

Jan. 10–May 15

Includes Passover workshop and two Shabbat sessions

Engage in study, discussion and hands-on experiences with Jews looking for adult-level basics, interfaith couples, individuals considering conversion, seekers and all lifelong learners.

Information and registration: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

Autumn class presents key challenge in Judaism

MAKING SPACE FOR GOD OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO REFINE PERSONAL THEOLOGY

Jews tend to shy away from God. According to **Rabbi Larry Raphael**, “God as a literal presence in people’s lives is a concept held perhaps by a minority of Jews. But think about the blessings we say all the time that begin, *Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu...* Blessed are you Lord, our God. Just how do we reconcile this with our own beliefs or lack of belief?”

Rabbi Raphael will help congregants and guests arrive at some reconciliation in his autumn course, *Godspeak: Making Space for God in Judaism*. It begins on Tuesday evening, October 27. Students will read *Finding God* by Rifat Sonsino

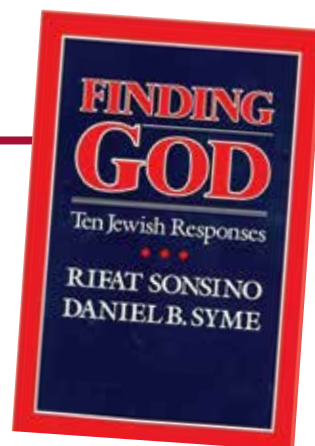
and Daniel Syme. See page 6 for details.

Historically, says Rabbi Raphael, Jews have focused on action over faith. “We have followed the mitzvot rather than belief in God and the necessity of accepting God in one’s life.” He points to the outstanding Reform theologian Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, who writes, “We know we are commanded but... we have no widespread understanding of Who or What authoritatively commands us, and how such a thing is possible...”

Yet God seems to hover over even the most modern of Jews. “What many

Jews lack,” says Rabbi Raphael, “is a vocabulary to address God in their own terms.

Godspeak seeks to provide some of that vocabulary so that attendees can further develop their own personal theology within the framework of Jewish tradition and practice.” ■



**Sat., Oct. 10
6:30–9:30 pm**

10th Annual Rabbi Martin Weiner Lecture LENS ON ISRAEL: FILM IN A DYNAMIC SOCIETY

Amy Kronish

Explore how film provides a vibrant—and often controversial—look at the Jewish state:

- 6:30 Presentation with film clips
- 7:30 Deli dinner by Max’s Restaurant followed by Havdalah
- 8:15 Short Israeli films

Amy Kronish writes and lectures on contemporary Israeli society as seen through film. A resident of Jerusalem, she authored *World Cinema: Israel* and co-authored *Israeli Film: A Reference Guide*.

Lecture free; dinner free for members, \$10 dinner donation for nonmembers. Reservations: David Cynman, 415.346.1720, x31, or dcynman@sherithisrael.org

Made possible by the Rabbi Martin S. Weiner Educational Fund. The Fund supports educational programs for Sherith Israel and our community. Your contributions are most welcome.

JEWISH BOOKS FOR JEWISH READERS

ANNUAL BOOK SALE

**Sneak preview:
Fri, Nov. 13
before
Kabbalat
Shabbat**

**Benefits
Religious
School**

Nov. 14–22



TALMUD TORAH/EDUCATION

early childhood

ECE programs

PLAYGROUPS

Mondays and Fridays

10:30 am–noon

Crawl, climb, jump and giggle with San Francisco families in our huge, bright indoor play space. Enjoy our playtime and music program—including songs, puppets, bubbles and parachute games—with early childhood director Jeni Markowitz Clancy. Fridays include a special Shabbat program with Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller. *Rates: Drop-in: \$12 per visit; 10-visit card: \$65 for CSI members; \$80 for nonmembers. Golden Gate Moms Group special rates apply only for the second Monday of the month. Just drop in; no sign-up necessary. Eric Drucker 415.346.1720, x27, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.*

MAMAS GROUP

Fridays, 9:15–10:30 am

Contact Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller for specific dates

Join Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller and new moms this fall for meaningful discussions about parenting, motherhood and bringing Jewish values and traditions into the family. *Rates for ten-week series: \$100 for members; \$125 for nonmembers. Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, 415.346.1720, x25, or rabbijst@sherithisrael.org.*

FAMILY SHABBAT

Second Friday of the month

Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11

6 pm: Services in Sanctuary

6:45 pm: Kiddush, congregational dinner and potluck dessert

Celebrate Shabbat with other CSI families with young children and the congregation in a service that features Lior Ben-Hur and his band. Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller and Rabbi Larry Raphael share stories meaningful for congregants of all ages.

HAVDALAH PAJAMA PARTY

Saturday, Nov. 21, 4:30–6 pm

Bring your little ones in their PJ's for music, puppets, a pizza party and Havdalah ceremony with Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf and early childhood director Jeni Markowitz Clancy. This is a joint Magalim and ECE event. *\$18/family for dinner and activities. RSVP by the Monday before: Eric Drucker 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.*

YAD B'YAD FAMILY PROGRAM

Sunday, Oct. 4, 10 am

Continuing throughout the year:

Nov. 8, Jan. 10, Feb. 21, April 3 and May 22

Yad B'Yad—hand-in-hand—experience *tzedakah* and *gemilut chasadim*—charity and acts of lovingkindness—with other CSI families with young children. We will work at the San Francisco Food Bank, plant a garden, cook for a shelter, or make blankets and cards for hospitalized children. We'll also enjoy storytelling, music, art, celebrations and traditions to take home throughout the year.

The free Yad B'Yad program is open to children ages 4–6 (PK–K) and their families. CSI members and nonmembers are welcome. RSVP: Jeni Markowitz Clancy, 415.346.1720, x32, or jclancy@sherithisrael.org. Yad B'Yad is generously sponsored by the Jewish Resource Specialist Program of the Early Childhood Initiative of the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund and the Jim Joseph Foundation.

TOT SHABBAT AT SHABBAT CHAI

Saturday, Oct. 17, 10:30 am

Join us for a fun-filled Shabbat for families with young children or grandchildren. Tot Shabbat features songs, storytelling, prayers and a family-friendly environment with a small Kiddush following services. Join the Shabbat Chai congregational potluck at noon.

ECE CHANUKAH HOEDOWN

FUNDRAISER

Featuring bluegrass music

with Isaac Zones and Shamati

Sunday, Dec. 6, 4:30–6:30 pm

Get ready to knock your Chanukah socks off and kick up your heels at our rootin' tootin' Chaunkah party for all ages. Enjoy fantastic food, wine, bluegrass music and, for the little cowpokes, balloon fun with Mr. Shap.

Tickets: \$55 per family in advance; \$70 per family at the door.

Eric Drucker 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

CSI MARIN DAY SCHOOL

PRESCHOOL TOURS

You are invited to tour our unique preschool. The Sherith Israel campus of Marin Day School offers an outstanding early-childhood curriculum and extended-day program with a warm experience filled with Jewish values, traditions and celebrations for children 2–5 years old. *Contact Jeni Clancy, 415.346.1720, x32, or jclancy@sherithisrael.org, to set up an appointment.*

For more information about ECE programs, contact CSI early childhood director Jeni Markowitz Clancy, 415.346.1720, x32, or jclancy@sherithisrael.org.



SHANAH TOVAH: Pre-K Religious School students wish their classmates all the best for an exciting new year.

religious school

Six-word stories say a lot

EXPERIENCED TEACHERS OFFER KNOWLEDGE, CARING, CREATIVITY

Any educational experience is only as good as the teachers involved. Sherith Israel boasts of an outstanding group of Religious School teachers. Their dedication to Jewish knowledge and experience sets a high bar. Here's an overview, including six-word statements from each of our teachers.

Ellie Solimani Adelman **Hebrew**

Originally from Dallas, she spent 10 years living in Tel Aviv, Cape Town and Bangkok. Works as a freelancer with some of the best floral designers in the country.

Strong teachers don't teach. They do.

Orr Agam **Third grade, Religious School and Hebrew School**

Born in San Francisco and raised in Daly City. Attended Brandeis-Hillel. Bachelor's degree from San Diego State University and master's from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.

Bestowing many gifts, therefore receiving them.

David Agam **Fifth-sixth grade, Religious School and sixth grade, Hebrew School**

Grew up in San Francisco. Many years experience teaching at Bay Area synagogues. A proud "Isramerican," has lived and studied in Israel and enjoys any opportunity he gets to travel there. Also works as CSI office manager.

A gratifying Jewish life is possible.

Rebekah Alessi **Assistant, second grade and Hebrew tutor**

A native San Franciscan, she lives with her family in North Beach. A published poet, she has led an improv troupe and plays music at the San Francisco Public Library.

Nice to see myself in you.

Lior Ben-Hur **Song leader**

Jerusalem-raised performing artist and leader of the band Sol Tevel, composer. B.A. in world music from San Francisco State. Won the 2013 national Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish education.

Classroom spotlight shines brighter on us.

Angela Bibiyan **Second grade**

B.A. in philosophy from UCLA. Now studying elementary education at San Francisco State. Fifth year at CSI. Also Shabbat School teacher at Beth Sholom and Jewish resource specialist at Rosenberg Early Childhood Center.

Be kind. The rest's just commentary.

Bruce Bierman **Storytelling and Jewish dance**

Graduate of U.C. Santa Cruz Theater Arts program, was a leading performer and teacher with the Aman Folk Ensemble. He completed the 2006 Karmiel foreign dance teacher's program in Israel with an emphasis on Yemenite dance. Has worked with CSI since 2006.

Many Torah paths. Each one unique.

Anastasia Dillman **Art**

Credentialed teacher, also works as a nanny and takes care of her son Apollo. Enjoys belly dancing, listening to and dancing to world music, singing, and immersing herself in nature.

I am inspiring. I am enthusiastic.

Chloe Erdan **Pre-K/K**

Born and raised in Los Angeles. A junior in the communicative disorders program at San Francisco State. Interns at the San Francisco Hillel.

With a smile, share the joy.



BONDING ON DAY ONE: Pre-K teacher **Chloe Erdan** engages a student in an art project celebrating the beginning of the school year.

religious school programs

SUNDAYS

Preschool to Grade 8
9:30 am-12:15

High School
Grades 9 to 12
12:30-1:45 pm
(Lunch included)

Hebrew School
Grades 3 to 5
12:30-2:00 pm

Students bring lunch and eat with teachers in Newman Hall, then go to class to learn the basics of reading, writing and speaking Hebrew, focusing on prayerbook literacy.

TUESDAYS

Hebrew School
Grades 3 to 6
4-5:45 pm

Basics of reading, writing and speaking Hebrew, focusing on prayerbook literacy.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL OFFICE

415.346.1720, x24, or
edrucker@sherithisrael.org

Experienced Teachers continues, page 15

HIGH HOLY DAY HIGHLIGHTS

Worshippers filled our sanctuary for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Lots more happened as well. *Top row:* Tot Yontiff enabled youngsters to take part in worship alongside parents and grandparents under the leadership of **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller**. *Middle row:* On Rosh Hashanah afternoon, congregants assembled at Crissy Field to cast their sins into the bay during Tashlich. They also ate, drank, sang and



played in the water. Argentine cantors **Inés Kapustiansky** and **Diego Reubensztein** led the music. *Bottom row:* On Yom Kippur congregants enjoyed special opportunities between morning and afternoon services. These included yoga, journaling, two walks and an interactive session with KQED Radio Forum host and congregant **Michael Krasny**.



CSI CONGREGATION SHERITH ISRAEL

people

Shaping the future of their city and their synagogue

PROFILE: VANESSA BILANCERI AND JEREMY GOLDBERG

The healing practice of tikkun olam—leaving the world better than you came into it—is a key value to Jews. Vanessa Bilanceri and Jeremy Goldberg are answering that call both in their community service careers and in how they make a Jewish home with their two-and-a-half year old son Marco.

There's another place where Jeremy and Vanessa find meaning, spiritually and socially: Congregation Sherith Israel. The family has been part of the CSI community for about three years, but Vanessa and Jeremy already seem like longtime congregants. They have made Sherith Israel a vital part of their family—whether attending Friday evening Shabbat services and the oneg afterwards with Marco, or taking Marco to Early Childhood Education activities. What's more, Vanessa serves on the committee searching for a new senior rabbi.

The path to Sherith Israel for Vanessa and Jeremy began in childhood, in their own observant, service-oriented families. Jeremy grew up in Lorain Ohio, outside of Cleveland. He prayed in the same temple where his great-grandparents worshiped. Jeremy tells the story of how after he was born, his mother and father stopped at the synagogue before going home to symbolically usher him into the Jewish faith. "It was part of our life and a part of my life growing up," Jeremy says.

His family was also active in the Jewish community. By elementary school Jeremy was involved with the Zionist youth group Young Judea. Jeremy found peer leadership, opportunities for social action and a connection to Israel in Young Judea. Through summer camp, regional conventions, a summer and then a year in Israel, Young Judea helped broaden Jeremy's worldview. "It wasn't over-

ly religious," he recalls about Young Judea. "But we were introduced to prayer, Shabbat, connection to tikkun olam and social movements at an early age."

Vanessa was on a similar track growing up outside of Dallas in Hurst, Texas. Her family was active in the Episcopal Church, and Vanessa welcomed leadership opportunities, serving as president of her church's youth group and as a counselor at summer camp. No surprise then that Vanessa and Jeremy, both committed to civic causes and social action, independently decided to take a semester away from the University of Texas at Austin and study in Washington, D.C. They met there. After college they settled in Washington and began a journey that has crossed oceans and continents over the past decade.

Jeremy founded a nonprofit group dedicated to community development in Africa, which took him between Washington and Uganda. The couple spent a year in Mexico City so Vanessa could study on a Rotary Foundation scholarship and serve as a cultural ambassador. In 2011 they moved to San Francisco so Jeremy could study at the

University of San Francisco for a master's degree in public affairs.

Now Jeremy and Vanessa are helping cities to respond better to their citizens. Jeremy is director of civic innovation for Civic Consulting USA, which advises mayors around the U.S. on how to bring technology and innovation into government by attracting talent from the public sector. Vanessa manages corporate partnerships for SPUR, which focuses on planning and governance issues affecting San Francisco.

For Jeremy, improving the quality of urban life has a lot to do with parents committing to raising their children in the city and not suburbia—a significant challenge for young, growing families in San Francisco. That's where Sherith Israel can play a strong role, Jeremy points out. "A connection to faith and the synagogue is one way to keep people in the city," he says.

Vanessa puts great importance on her work on the committee charged with the critical task of finding a successor to retiring **Senior Rabbi Larry Raphael**. "It is literally a call of duty," she says. "A spiritual community and home has always been really important to me." So the opportunity "to be able to shape the future of the synagogue," and the fact that the committee would invite "input from an interfaith family, from a mom," Vanessa says, inspires her to keep giving back and coming back.

"It's incumbent upon all of us to see Sherith Israel move forward, to see it grow, to see more families," Vanessa says. "We all have a role to play in shaping and creating the synagogue life we want. Instead of saying 'I wish this,' it's every member's responsibility to make that happen." ■



AT HOME IN SAN FRANCISCO AND AT SHERITH ISRAEL: Vanessa Bilanceri and Jeremy Goldberg, with their son Marco,

12 bringing a commitment to community service to their adopted city and new synagogue.

The new year sparked a new tradition at CSI: On the first day of Religious School members of the CSI Board of Trustees who don't have children attending served a welcoming breakfast to school families. **Valerie Jahan**, **Helen Luey** and **Alan Mirviss** greeted arriving families. **Erik Migdail** and **Jerry Hurwitz** donned their chef hats and took over the kitchen to prepare scrambled eggs. **Gale Gottlieb**, the cold cereal expert, helped kids choose their morning favorites. And **Joan Libman** sported a coffee filter as a hat. HaMotzi volunteer **Brad Graham** and his sister **Ruth**, visiting from Los Angeles also helped cook. Bagels and lox and fresh fruit completed the menu. More than 100 people attended the breakfast. Executive director **Amy Mallor** reports that the energy in the room was terrific, with everyone happy to be back after their summer break...

Early in September, just before the holidays, **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller** was part of an exchange of letters (really essays) on preserving the politics of hope and possibility in *Sh'ma*, a journal of Jewish ideas founded by liberal theologian Eugene Borowitz. The exchange with activist **Jon Elkin** was also published on the website of the Jewish newspaper the Forward. The News Nosh admits becoming totally distracted from work while reading the thoughtful pieces. You can find them online at [forward.com/culture/jewishness/319944/exchange-1/...](http://forward.com/culture/jewishness/319944/exchange-1/)

Kudos to **Shelley Gottlieb**, who was recently honored with a regional Jefferson Award for her public service work as a court-appointed special advocate and as the owner and handler of a therapy dog. She is also an advocate for people with developmental disabilities. At CSI Shelley was one of the founders of the inclusion committee. The Jefferson Awards, founded in 1972, are dedicated to inspiring and celebrating public service...

Best of luck to **Lindsay Lassman**, recently appointed as the Northern California finance director for the Hillary for America campaign. She invites anyone interested in getting involved to let her know at LLassman@HillaryClinton.com. Lindsay was also appointed to be a delegate to the California Democratic Party convention...

Mazel tov to **Nancy Brunn**, who just started work as a "concierge" for Big Tent Judaism (formerly the Jewish Outreach Institute) to help engage unaffiliated Jews in Jewish life. Her work will be focused on single mothers in San Francisco. Nancy, mother of seven-year-old twins, will concentrate on developing micro-communities of solo moms around San Francisco, planning events and meetings with other Jewish organizations and congregations. She is a member of the inclusion task force here at CSI...

Daniel LaPushin recently started work as a digital analytics manager for Accenture, an international consulting company specializing in helping clients across all industries develop insight from their data. Congratulations Dan...

Ira Fateman announces that San Francisco State College of Extended Learning is partnering with the Institute for Personal Financial Planning—he's CEO—to offer an all-day personal financial planning workshop at its downtown campus on October 17. The multimedia class covers developing financial goals, cash flow, budgeting, spending, saving, credit, debt, insurance, investing, estate planning and taxes. "That's a lot to cover," says Ira, "but we make the workshop engaging, entertaining and interactive." Find out more at www.cel.sfsu.edu/financial-planning/classes-fall2015.cfm...

Just back in time for Rosh Hashanah, **JRhoda** and **Sheldon Wolfe**, and **Frank Mainzer** and **Lonnie Zwerin** visited ancient synagogues in the old cities of Dubrovnik and Split in Croatia. The Old Synagogue in Dubrovnik, established in 1352, is the oldest Sephardic synagogue still in use and the second oldest synagogue in Europe. Split's synagogue was established during the early 16th century following purges in Spain and Portugal. Archaeological findings proved Jews lived in the city more than 400 years before...

Ari Reisman, our former executive Assistant started nursing school at UCSD this fall. We wish Ari well with her studies...

And hot off the presses from Twitter and BuzzFeed to the New York Times comes the announcement that author **Daniel Handler** and his wife, illustrator **Lisa Brown**, have made a million-dollar donation to the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. As Lisa told BuzzFeed, "My husband and I have supported Planned Parenthood for years. ... This year Planned Parenthood has gone through a series of unfortunate events, and it felt right to make our support more public and more dramatic." ■

By the News Nosh, aka Ellen Newman.

Please send bits and bites of gossip to ellennewman@earthlink.net. Be sure to put "News Nosh" in the subject line.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AMY MALLOR



MY JEWISH JOURNEY: MEMORIES AND TORAH

Westfield, New Jersey, 1956. That's where my Jewish journey began. Dad came from an Orthodox background, Mom from Reform. We observed every major holiday. Mom and my grandma prepared meals that included homemade gefilte fish and luscious flourless tortes. We even had a "traditional" tablecloth handed down from Dad's mother. It portrayed a map of Florida. Tradition is important. My sister-in-law still uses it!

I remember our Shabbats, too. Mom made a great dinner served on our best china. Dad had flowers delivered. Both recited prayers. Mom's began, "As the light shines on this Shabbat night, may this light, Oh Lord, shine on my husband, our children (and later in life their grandchildren), our family and friends." Dad's prayer started, "We are grateful for the past week." Mom lived to 91. Dad is 95. There's something to be said about Shabbat blessings!

My synagogue experience started at

the Reform shul where Dad served as president. Mom taught special-needs classes in religious school. My siblings and I were b'nai mitzvah and confirmands. Later, my daughter and I joined Congregation Bet Breira in Miami. She also was bat mitzvah and confirmed. My parents spent six months a year in Florida, so we were blessed with more special Shabbats.

I served on Bet Breira's membership committee and became the congregational vice president. I spent so much time at the synagogue that many people thought I had a part-time job there. Loving synagogue life, I interned for several months with the executive director at another synagogue while continuing to volunteer at Bet Breira. In 1998, I took my first executive director position in Morristown, New Jersey. I later returned to Florida to serve as ED at the synagogue where I'd interned.

A special awakening hit me when the

rabbi and I raised funds to restore one of our Torahs. We came up with a special incentive. Donors could "purchase" a verse or passage. We would bring the Torah to their home during the week and read the portion containing their passage. The donors arranged a dinner, coffee or dessert for other members with the rabbi attending. The Torah would be unrolled and the group would be awestruck. Many had never seen a Torah up close. When this Torah was not visiting, it sat on a stand next to my desk. It constantly reminded me of an admonition found later in the Bible in Micah 6:8—and found in our dome here at Sherith Israel—*Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.*

Writing this serves as a kind of t'shuvah. It returns me to my Jewish roots and strengthens my Jewish commitment. Having emerged from the Days of Awe, may we all connect anew with our ongoing Jewish journeys. ■

SENIOR RABBI INTERVIEWS, from page 1

vision, financial situation and view of itself as an institution and community.

Because all 15 committee members cannot attend all sessions, interviews are recorded and sent out for review. Thus every committee member has the opportunity to evaluate every candidate.

Future steps will include opportunities to visit top candidates in their home synagogues. Committee members will observe rabbis as they conduct Shabbat worship, Torah study and other activities. Visits will be announced to the rabbis in advance. Following those visits, the committee will narrow its choices further and invite candidates to come to Sherith Israel. These visits to CSI will include an opportunity for the search committee and other members of our Sherith Israel family to meet candidates in person. The Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) offers guidelines for such visits, which we will follow. Typically the candidate will teach a class or hold a study session. The candidate also will have a chance to see our synagogue and meet some of our members.

Finally, the committee will recommend a candidate to the CSI Board of Trustees. If approval is granted, the congregation will vote to accept the new rabbi. Following the rabbi's signing a

letter of intent, contract negotiation will be conducted.

"If possible, we'd like to have our new senior rabbi under contract early this spring," says committee chair **Valerie Krieger Jahan**. "This will give us as much time as possible to help our new senior rabbi and the congregation engage in a smooth transition as **Rabbi Larry Raphael** prepares to retire." Sherith Israel's new spiritual leader will officially join the synagogue on July 1, 2016.

Valerie plans to attend the Union for Reform Judaism biennial in Orlando Florida, November 4–8. There she will learn more about the transition process—the period between contracting with a new senior rabbi and our new rabbi's assuming his or her position.

Committee members relate that the search is going well. **Stacy Passman** says, "We are identifying excellent candidates. Through this process, we will have a rabbi that is a perfect fit for CSI." **Dan Schumm** adds, "I have been very impressed by the quality and breadth of the candidates who have applied for our position. I have been equally struck by the enthusiasm they have expressed about what we do and who we are." ■

PASSAGES

A hearty mazel tov to each of our families celebrating the following simchas:

BIRTHS

Ben Teo Koffler, son of Lee Koffler and Kwee Bin Teo, August 16, 2015

Chase Kieran Zilberman, son of Ilana Cohen and David Zilberman, September 2, 2015

Hannah Louise Claude Spiro, daughter of Julie and Rob Spiro, September 14, 2015

Alexander Joseph Balistreri, son of Kathy Joseph and Mike Balistreri, grandson of Phyllis Joseph, September 19, 2015

NEW MEMBERS

Josie and Alex AG Shapiro

Justin Bercovich and Laura Donaldson

Ilana Cohen and David Zilberman

Daniel Berman and Sara Crumley

Annette Fleishman

Benjamin Kanner and Rose Kelly

Alexis Kershner

Janet Lustgarten

Michelle and Alexander Newburgh

Helen Pelzman

Carla Shaw

Denise Sobel

Robert and Julie Spiro

Eric and Becca Stone

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May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.

Charlotte Blatteis, mother of
David Blatteis

Jacquelyn Greenblatt, mother of
Michael, Brian, and Rachel Greenblatt

Cynthia Kronish, mother of
Sharon Wasserman

EXPERIENCED TEACHERS, from page 9

Laura Gross First grade

First-grade teacher in the San Francisco public schools with nine years at CSI. Loves taking pictures, paying respect to the Golden Gate Bridge and exploring the Bay Area.

Judaism, the story of our ancestors.

Ben Josloff Eighth grade

Native San Franciscan has worked at CSI since ninth grade. Applying to bachelor's-level nursing programs around the Bay Area.

Learn to grow, but be open.

Adele Julius Pre-K/K

Freshman at SFSU. Grew up in traditional Jewish-Israeli household speaking Hebrew with her mother and her mother's family. Attended Sinai Akiba Academy from PreK-8th grade. Worked at Jewish sleep-away camp in Malibu this summer.

Judaism: A religion, community and nation.

Eitam Kohen Fourth grade, Religious School and Sunday Hebrew

Born in Israel, moved to Bay Area in 2006. B.S. in environmental studies from San Francisco State. Teaching at CSI since 2009. Passionate Liverpool FC soccer fan.

Be the spark that ignites creativity.

Aaron Tracht Seventh grade

Born in Berkeley. Mom was head administrator and Dad president at Temple Beth Hillel. Moved to Los Angeles at eight. Senior studying biology and education at SFSU.

From generation to generation, Jewish gift.

Natalie Weizman Eighth grade

In her last year at San Francisco State, majoring in cell biology and Jewish studies. Plans on taking a year off before applying to pharmacy schools. Fifth year at CSI.

Everyone can be a good Jew. ■



Carry your part of the Torah

REFORM CA

As Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller announced on Rosh Hashanah, Congregation Sherith Israel is collaborating with Reform CA. The project, comprised of Reform congregations across the state, is a joint campaign of Just Congregations, the Religious Action Center of the Union for Reform Judaism, and the Peace and Justice Committee of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. All are acting together to create a more just California. "Being part of Reform CA allows us to show up with a Jewish voice on statewide issues," explains Rabbi Saxe-Taller.

The current issue being tackled by Reform CA is criminal justice. The project, called "B'yachad—In This Together," calls on Governor Jerry Brown to sign AB 953, known as the Racial Profiling Bill. It provides tools to end racial and identity profiling in California by requiring all police departments to report basic information on police-community interactions. AB 953 has passed both houses of the legislature, but Governor Brown is still undecided. Email Governor Brown by visiting <http://goo.gl/QUejRk>.

Other Reform CA opportunities include helping build relationships with non-Jewish congregations, being "on-call" to contact our representatives in support of social justice campaigns, and joining with others for a book-group style read of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. You can also join **Stacy Passman, Dan Dohan, Jordan Elias** and Rabbi Saxe-Taller as part of CSI's group working closely with Reform CA.

Contact Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, 415.346.1720, x25, or rabbijst@sherithisrael.org, or Stacy Passman at spassman@gmail.com to become involved.

JEWISH COALITION FOR LITERACY

Congregation Sherith Israel hosted a fun and successful JCL tutor training and orientation in September. Among the new trainees was our very own **Julie Lekach House**, who will soon begin working with some lucky readers in a San Francisco public school. Contact Janet Parker, 415-282-1495 or jparkersf@hotmail.com.

SUMMER BOOK DRIVE

And the winner is ... **Apollo Dillman!** With the help of his parents, **Ana** and **Japeth**, Apollo donated a ton of baby-boy and little-boy books to help other children learn to love reading. Thank you, Apollo!

CARING FOR AGING LOVED ONES

CSI is part of an interfaith group of congregations working to improve conditions for the aging population in San Francisco and to support each other in caring for aging loved ones. Contact Mikiko Huang at mikmce@yahoo.com.

HAMOTZI AND CHICKEN SOUPERS

Every Sunday, we cook and deliver food for 125+ people at two San Francisco shelters. Once a month, we also prepare meals for homebound seniors, the disabled and chronically ill. Contact Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.

LEARNING TO LISTEN ABOUT

ISRAEL: Many Jews are avoiding conversations about Israel. On August 25, Resetting the Table, a program of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs' Civility Campaign, presented a workshop at CSI encouraging Jews to engage in civil dialogue on the topic. **Rabbi Melissa Weintraub**, co-director of Resetting the Table, led 40 CSI congregants and guests in discussions and exercises designed to practice vital listening skills. The hope: that participants will bring new skills to their discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian issue with family and friends.



SYNAGOGUE BEST PRACTICES, from page 1

port many synagogues at once,” explains past CSI president **Lynn Sedway**, who has chaired the partnership’s steering committee. “It provided economies of scale so we could all learn valuable lessons in the areas of membership, finances, fundraising and governance.”

CSI’s work began with a membership survey and numerous workshops and seminars with other congregations. It has moved into a coaching phase. Through Federation Partnership grants, a CSI task force on organizational design has begun working with professional consultants. They offer deep knowledge of synagogue life to help us to look more specifically at whether our organizational structure truly reflects CSI’s vision and values.

“We started with the CSI vision statement updated by the strategic planning committee in 2014,” Valerie says. “At the end of the process, we hope that member involvement will increase and that our synagogue structure and organization will reflect the needs of our community. We are looking at everything from staff work loads to volunteers’ satisfaction with their participation.”

At the August meeting, a room full of CSI board members and committee chairs learned more about what it means to volunteer in a synagogue context. Coach **Rabbi Andi Berlin**, formerly of Temple Sinai in Oakland and now a corporate consultant with training in multi-party mediation, described what’s unique about both volunteering and working for a synagogue.

“In most nonprofit situations,” says Rabbi Berlin, “we are geared toward helping others outside the organization. In a synagogue, we are our own customers. In a synagogue we are talking about people’s souls; raw emotions come in the door. The synagogue is where we celebrate and mourn. People bring their emotional selves to the synagogue. In the rest of their work, volunteer or paid, people bring their professional selves.”

This distinction can lead to governance from emotions and awkwardness in relationships between lay leadership, staff and clergy. “The majority of synagogues need help professionalizing,” Rabbi Berlin noted. The room full of volunteers listened intently as she described how important it is that volunteer work be meaningful. “Volunteering should be the poetry of people’s lives. People want to be effective, to know what they are trying to accomplish and whether it is working.” But, she adds, volunteers also need the tools necessary to do their jobs and opportunities for their own spiritual growth.

To complicate matters further, Rabbi Berlin pointed out that the purposes of lay leadership and professional leadership in a synagogue are identical: to carry out the mission of the congregation. But who is responsible and who is accountable? Clergy, staff and volunteers need to work in partnership. With so much overlap in goals and responsibilities between volunteers and staff, tasks need to be crystal clear.

The group also learned about RACI, a process management technique used in cross-functional projects to clarify roles and responsibilities. Congregant **Karen Zelmar**, a member of the organizational design task force and director of energy efficiency programs at PG&E, described the term to the group.

R stands for *responsible*—the person who actually completes the task. **A** is for *accountable*—the person answerable for the activity or decision. **C** is for *consultation*—typically with a subject-matter expert or someone with institutional history who needs to be consulted before a decision or action. **I** is for *informed*—someone who need to be kept in the loop.

“RACI is great for projects with lots of different voices. Using it can clarify who is responsible and who is more of a contributor,” comments Karen. “The nature of volunteering puts a different angle on it. Everyone has the best of intentions, but it can be unclear who is responsible—who is the ‘boss’ of a project. Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities can lead to frustration.”

It’s all about coordination points. “If you don’t talk out loud about who does what, both volunteers and staff can feel frustrated,” adds Karen, who sits on the organizational design task force with board president **Evan Kletter**, **Howard Wexler**, **Lonnie Zwerin**, **Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf** and Valerie. “I’ve been really impressed with the level of involvement that CSI’s board and volunteers contribute to make the synagogue run.” The next step in the organizational design process is to bring RACI to each committee and help members work through the process for themselves.

Another purpose of the organizational design task force is to look at leadership development for the future of the synagogue. “More and more people don’t want to sit on committees,” comments Valerie. Our current bylaws mandate ten standing committees. For today’s congregants with full family and professional lives, the prospect of monthly meetings may be too much of a commitment.”

The committee recognizes that in order to attract younger volunteers, CSI needs to be more nimble and flexible, Valerie points out. “Not every committee needs to meet monthly or even in person.” Innovative options include using Go To Meeting and other forms of online connectivity to meet with people outside the synagogue walls, call-ins to meetings, and short-term task forces or initiatives to accomplish specific goals.

We are in a transitional time, Valerie notes, reflecting on our rabbinic search. She sees this work as part of the search to know ourselves better and help us communicate who we are to candidates for the position of senior rabbi and to find a rabbi who is a great fit. “Bottom line,” she adds, “our goal is to help volunteers enjoy their experience with the synagogue, to feel ownership through their participation in ways large and small.” ■

“Volunteering should be the poetry of people’s lives. People want to be effective, to know what they are trying to accomplish and whether it is working.”

DONATIONS

Includes donations from June 1–September 8, 2015

Todah rabbah — Thank you all for your generous support of Congregation Sherith Israel.

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Marilyn Allen in memory of Michelle Allen
Harold & Dorothy Auerbach in memory of Robert Joseph Auerbach
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James Blattner in memory of Jean Blattner
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Rachel Kolen in honor of Jessica Kraft and Jordan Elias
Zandy Krischer & Al Blank in honor of the 50th anniversary of Lee Ann and Paul Steiner
Alice Levkoff in honor of Dr. Jan Maisel
Shahram Nassi in honor of an aliyah for Cyrus Nassi
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich
Barbara Reiss in memory of Philip Reiss
Daniel & Jayne Rothblatt in memory of Shike Rothblatt
Henry Safrit in honor of Michael Gaines and Betsy Wolkin
Audrey Sockolov in memory of William Moskovitz

Renata & Mark Telefus in memory of Leah Goldman & Nehama Telefus
Marina & Anatoly Tikhman in memory of Yelizaveta Sheynerman
Alice Tordjman in memory of Albert Elie Tordjman
Etya Tsipenyuk in honor of Nehama Beygel and in memory of Leo Tsipenyuk
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Janet Parker & Chris Focht in honor of Emily Pelc for her beautiful and inspiring singing

ONEG FUND

Kathryn Jessup in honor of the Zagatsky family naming ceremony
Aaron & Jami Johnson in honor of the naming of Ashland Rose Johnson
Helen Luey
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich

RABBI RAPHAEL'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Jack Anderson in memory of Florence Anderson
Shoshana Chana Asher in memory of Esfir ("Esther") Sokolovskaya, Isaak Khaimskiy, and Cristal Senda
Tasia Melvin Bartell in memory of Michael George Melvin
Elliot Eisenberg in memory of Irving Eisenberg
Joanne Yawitz Farkas in honor of Joanne and Gabe Farkas' wedding celebration
Michael Gaines in memory of Joshua Wolkin
Doba Gendelman in memory of Miriam Gendelman
Marcia & David Glassel in memory of Selma and George Glassel, and in memory of Charlotte Blatteis
Aleksandr Kagan in memory of Samuil Kagan, Sarah Kagan, Pasha Khazanova, and Yakov Zabryanskiy
Nadine Koss in memory of Roy Leon Koss
Arlene & Steve Krieger in memory of Clarence Krieger
Alan Mirviss, Diane Fellman & Family in memory of Jean Fellman
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich
Agnes Rothblatt in honor of the bar mitzvah of Mitchell Holtzer-Steiner
Rona Rothenberg and Family in honor of the birth of Amari and Jasper Sheftel-Gomes and in honor of the wedding of Abigail Freeman Colyer and Rob Nance
Gav Shelton & Joseph Amster in honor of their wedding
Jay & Ellie Shukert in memory of Helen Shukert
Lyuba Vaynblat in memory of Isaak Vaynblat
Mitchell Wunsh in honor of the 28th anniversary of his bar mitzvah

RABBI SAXE-TALLER'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Shoshana Chana Asher in memory of Annette Goodman, Dr. Stanley Levinson, and Marilyn Singer
Leah & Terry Bricker

Alan Mirviss, Diane Fellman & Family in memory of Michael Loring and Deborah Lee Mirviss
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich

RABBI ZIMMERMAN GRAF'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Lisa M. Buchwalter in honor of Ayla Sierra Rabin
Eric Goldberg
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich

RABBI WEINER'S EDUCATION FUND

Linda Harris Chaban and Family in memory of Belle W. Harris
Tengiz Iosebashvili in memory of Larisa Iosebashvili
Mona Friedman Kolko in honor of the 50th anniversary of Lee Ann and Paul Steiner
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL FUND

Jacalyn Kornblatt in memory of Charlotte Blatteis
Sam & Laura Oryol in honor of Blyuma and Alexander Oryol and in memory of Sofiya and Lev Rabinovich

POLLAK LABE FUND

Stuart & Lee Pollak in memory of Siesel Maibach's sister

SEISMIC RETROFIT CAMPAIGN

The David B. Gold Foundation
Sheila & Alan Gordon and Family in memory of Jim Bennett and Jeanette Kossen
Julie Lekach House & Stanley Lekach
Thierry & Valerie Jahan
Gary Moss & Mary Hough
Larry & Terrie Raphael
Ellen & Daniel Schumm
Zachary Adelson Trust
Vincent Hoenigman in honor of Lynn and Paul Sedway

SYNAGOGUE PRESERVATION FUND

Shoshana Chana Asher

ANNUAL FUND

Zachary Adelson Trust
Shoshana Chana Asher in honor of Cantor Martin Feldman
Kenneth & Lynn Baron
Claire & James Davis
Marcia & David Glassel
Susen Grossman
Van & Jeri Hart
Thierry & Valerie Jahan
Arlene & Steve Krieger
Joan Libman & Jim Coughlin
Leon Luey & Helen Sloss Luey
Erik & Denise Migdail and Family
Benjamin & Beth Ruby Pollock
Naomi Porat
Eric Safire in memory of Wilma Safire
Margaret & Mel Scheinman
Robert & Audrey Sockolov
Stephen Weiner
David & Kathryn Werdegarr
Julia & Vladimir Zagatsky in honor of the Jewish naming of Kathryn Jessup



HIGH HOLY DAY THANKS

Let's give 1100 cheers to **Michael** and **Jane Miller** for their generous donation of 1100 LED light bulbs to replace the outdated incandescent bulbs in the sanctuary. With a life span of about 10 years, the new bulbs mean a favorite CSI tradition—counting unlit bulbs—is over. We'll get over it since the new bulbs will keep the sanctuary cooler on warm days and will generate significant savings each year.

Thanks also to the ushers who welcomed everyone to the sanctuary: **Shoshana Asher, David Bolaffi, Susan Borkin, Gale Gottlieb, Julie House, Jerry Hurwitz, Valerie Jahan, Joan Libman, Helen Luey, Erik Migdail, Alan Mirviss, Lynn Sedway** and **Jean Shore**.

Thanks to our presenters and hikers who participated during the afternoon on Yom Kippur: **Ingrid Apter, Susan Borkin, Al** and **Ardis Breslauer, Michael Krasny** and **Amy Plevin**.

Todah rabbah to our high school students who carried the Torah during morning services: **Frieda Baldonado, William Geist** and **JT Werth** on Rosh Hashanah and **Gillian Berkowitz, Joshua Kerzhner** and **Aryana Senel** on Yom Kippur.

Many thanks to the CSI staff for keeping everything coordinated and running smoothly under the direction of executive director **Amy Mallor: David Agam, Sara Blum, David Cynman** and **Eric Drucker**.

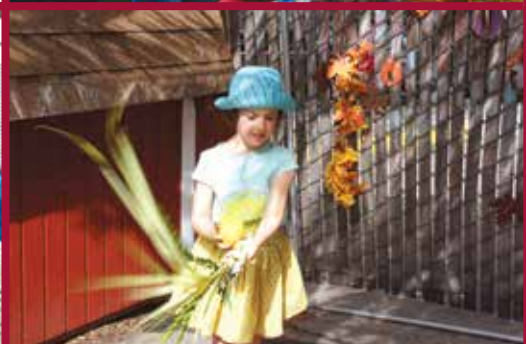


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Reform Judaism since 1903

OCTOBER–DECEMBER, 2015 SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS



UNDER THE SUKKAH: Religious School students celebrated Sukkot—the Festival of Booths—marking the end of the harvest season. Sherith Israel has two sukkot—one in the outdoor entrance leading to Newman Hall and the other in our early childhood education play yard. Students of all ages had a chance to listen to stories, learn about the holiday and wave the lulav and etrog according to ancient custom.