

# SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS

FEBRUARY –  
JUNE 2023



*An evolving synagogue for changing times*

## CSI BUILDS A COMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES

A “kaleidoscope” is how Rabbi Jessica Graf excitedly describes the community of communities we’re building at Sherith Israel.

For Rabbi Graf, the goal is “to create as many opportunities as possible for people to connect with other members of our synagogue.” She notes that the pandemic made it clear how much people need to engage with other people. “Covid forced us to be more creative about intentionally building smaller communities within the larger community.”

CSI offers congregants a remarkable breadth of opportunities. Our legacy programs—Torah Study, HaMotzi/Chicken Soupers, our Koleynu choir and our ever-growing social action work—form the bedrock of engagement for many members. Other programs include memoir writing and Bringing Meaning and Spirituality to the Transitions of Life—enabling participants to come together to talk or write about life, from the profound to the mundane.

Two movie groups, inspired by Rabbi Marty Weiner’s (z”l) love for movies, and the book club have been joined by several newer affinity groups organized around secular interests and activities. Congregants attend jazz concerts together, read and discuss crime fiction, and hike the trails of San Francisco and the Bay Area. Young adult and Gen-X members connect with others in their age groups, while parents of teens and tweens gather to relax and have fun.

While many of the topics are not explicitly Jewish, the groups are made up of people who are and look at the world through a Jewish lens. “These groups create a wonderful opportunity for people to connect with old friends, make new friends and talk about issues that don’t immediately appear to be Jewish, but that take on a Jewish flavor,” adds Rabbi Graf.

CSI’s kaleidoscopic approach to building community syncs with what we are learning about the increasing diversity of the Bay Area Jewish community. The recent survey of Bay Area Jews by the Jewish Community Relations Council found a wide range of ways that people who identify as Jewish define that identity—family tradition, culture, ethical values, the Holocaust and Israel. Religion and spirituality—traditionally the core mission of synagogues—ranked relatively low.

Creating a community of communities is CSI’s answer to the strategic challenge of building and sustaining a stronger synagogue. In articles throughout the issue, we describe the range of programs—educational, age-cohort, cross-generational, affinity groups and the like—that increasingly shape individual relationships to the broader Sherith Israel community. ■

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### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

#### SHABBAT PURIM

Friday, March 3, 6 pm

#### CONFIRMATION

Friday, May 19, 6 pm

7:15 pm Community Dinner



### PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION FOR FALL 2023 OPENS FEBRUARY 2

CSI preschool director **Carolyn Mulcahy** (left) watches as education director **Jonathan Emanuel** “interviews” a prospective preschooler at the Sherith Littles Sukkot celebration.

See full story on page 13.



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## A MOMENT WITH CANTOR TOBY GLASER

### ADULT B. MITZVAH BRINGS PRAYER TO LIFE

In late October, right after the High Holidays, we commenced our adult b. mitzvah program. It has been a lively and exciting process, both for our students and myself. After consulting with several colleagues from different congregations about their experiences, as well as with Rabbi Jessica Graf about previous cohorts from Sherith Israel, I decided on a direction and emphasis for our own group.

I knew that I wanted a chanting component, but my colleagues warned me that getting 12- and 13-year-olds to sing and chant in public is one thing, while convincing older adults to learn and do the same is a whole different story. We tend to get more self-conscious as we age, so although our students will be chanting at least one verse of Torah, this is only one area of study in our course.

I also realized that one component lacking in many adult b. mitzvah courses was studying the actual structure of liturgy. Why do our prayers exist in the form they do? When did this happen? I decided that a strong focus on liturgical history and development would be a key aspect of our course.

Our classes generally consist of a discussion of the previous week's readings. Students ask questions and we talk about key concepts raised in the text and how they relate to our studies. We continue with a practical study of the Siddur,

focusing on one particular set of prayers. We started with the psalms of Kabbalat Shabbat and have recently explored the blessings of the *Sh'ma*, as well as the morning blessings and verses of praise from our *Shacharit* service. It is amazing for students to see the logic and parallels which exist among our various daily services, and how the Reform movement has edited, altered and adapted these different "prayer rubrics." We usually finish our studies by chanting various prayers, as well as learning the different Torah trope "families," and how they sound in context within the Torah and in prayers such as the *V'havta*.

Our students are widely varied in their backgrounds and Jewish experiences. Some teach in our religious school, others found Jewish practice later. They span in age from young adults to seasoned congregants of many decades. It is a joy hearing them ask questions about how certain prayers developed, and why our Siddur looks the way it does.

**Skills developed in chanting and navigating the prayerbook will enable our students to pray more deeply and participate more fully in communal life.**

The ultimate goal of a b. mitzvah is for participants to become competent to lead community in prayer as a Jewish adult. I hope that, through our time together, our students will develop this skill and pass it on to others. ■

### PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

**"Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before the LORD..." — Gen. 19:27**

The Talmud relates two reasons why Jews traditionally pray three times daily. One corresponds to the two Temple offerings and the burning of animal limbs into the night. The other attributes the prayer schedule to the patriarchs. Abraham instituted the morning prayer after God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah: "Next morning, Abraham hurried to

the place where he had stood before the LORD..." (Gen. 19:27). Isaac originated afternoon prayer: "And Isaac went out walking in the field toward evening..." (Gen. 24:63). Jacob was the first to say the evening prayer: "He came upon a certain place and stopped there for the night..." (Gen. 28:11). Of course, one may pray at any time. ■

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## Questions for RABBI JESSICA GRAF

**Last fall, the Jewish Community Relations Council published a survey on Bay Area Jewish Identity, focusing on identity, experiences and attitudes. It offers food for thought for all of us individually and for Sherith Israel as a modern, Bay Area synagogue. We asked Rabbi Jessica Graf for her response.**

### **Q: What are your key takeaways from the survey?**

**A:** First, here's a snapshot of survey responses: 36% of respondents identify as Reform Jews. Interestingly, 23% considered themselves "secular" Jews and 17% responded "none" when asked about their Jewish denomination. Most respondents are not active in Jewish communal life, with only 18% answering that they regularly attend Jewish activities. 42% reported living in an interfaith family.

Despite the answers above, being Jewish is important to 86% of respondents. According to the survey, family heritage and the Holocaust rank high as factors in Jewish identity. Religion and spirituality rank lowest in significance to the people who answered the survey.

The survey puts numbers to the fact that we live in a complicated time. Jewish identity is being reimagined. On one hand, we're more visible and accepted in society than ever before. For the first time in history, the vice president's official house has a *mezuzah* on the door and a Jewish resident. And the presidential grandchildren are Jewish. At the same time, we are facing rising antisemitism in America. It's a jarring dichotomy. We are more accepted and appreciated by many, while at the same time targeted by more visible antisemites who have come out of the woodwork, making antisemitism a topic of national discussion.

### **Q: If a substantial majority of Bay Area Jews do not consider religion a core part of their identity, how can synagogues address their needs?**

**A:** Synagogues face the same challenge that they have for the last several decades. With increasing acceptance in American society, some Jews feel very comfortable letting the Jewish part of their identity fade into the distance. Particularly in our city—which prides itself on diversity and multi-culturalism—I think many people don't want to appear "tribal" by identifying with our wonderful tribe. Historically, only a small percentage of Jews in the Bay Area have belonged to a synagogue.

The survey reminds us of what we've heard over and over again in the last few decades: Most American Jews claim not to be "religious." If they say that Judaism is im-

portant to them, it is usually in a cultural (or gastronomic!) context. Personally, I believe this is overly simplistic; reality is more nuanced. I think many Jews are very proud of the Torah's moral code as a foundation of our American society. I think most Jews value our traditions and ethical values, the wisdom of our texts and our beautiful prayers more than the survey data show. For example, many people who claim to be "just culturally Jewish" love to sit in a sukkah, are moved by the prayers on Kol Nidre or light Chanukah candles, representing the miracle of Jewish survival. I think the word "religious" just sounds too scary.

### **Q: What is Sherith Israel doing to meet the challenges of a largely secular Jewish population?**

**A:** We offer many opportunities for people to engage with the community. You can come in through HaMotzi or our book club or Torah Study or services or choir or our memoir group or one of our affinity groups. You can hike, study jazz, read crime fiction and make new friends. You can take an adult education class and challenge yourself to study our texts or learn to chant Torah. You can come to Shabbat services and listen to beautiful music while finding your own meaning in our ancient prayers. You can get involved in our social action work and apply our ancient values to healing the world.

Synagogues offer a unique opportunity for people to engage across generations, interests and lifestyles, and to meet people who have a common sacred connection. I invite all Jews to explore their Jewish identity in new ways at Sherith Israel.

### **Q: Given the data and your experiences at Sherith Israel, what are your aspirations for CSI for 2023?**

Human nature hasn't changed over thousands of years. We have the benefit of learning from our ancestors. I'm always amazed at how much wisdom our ancient texts have to share with us about our modern world. I look forward to discussing, debating and investigating our fascinating world together through a Jewish lens. My aspiration is that Sherith Israel continues to be a community in which our diverse, complex Jewish identities can grow and flourish. ■





Learning communities

## ADULT LEARNERS BUILD CONNECTIONS

Studying together, whether in person or in little Zoom rectangles, has always been a core way for congregants to come together in community.

Some adult-education programs have continued for more than two decades, while others are relatively recent. All provide rich sources of connection around Jewish content.

“It feels great that we continue to learn together,” says **Rabbi Jessica Graf**. “That’s what we’re here for.” Adds CSI president **Judie Wexler**, “Learning together has always been important in Jewish tradition and at Sherith Israel. It’s exciting to see the mix of congregant- and clergy-led learning. There are programs for everyone.”

**Torah Study, led by clergy (and occasionally congregants), remains CSI’s longest-running learning program, dating back to the 1990s.** Before the pandemic, congregants gathered every Saturday morning to discuss the weekly portion over lox and bagels, coffee and

tea. Covid moved Torah Study to Zoom, where it remains for the foreseeable future. The core group numbers about two dozen, and Zoom enables them to join the discussion from anywhere in the world.

The experience is both educational and communal. **Jacalyn Kornblatt**, who has attended Torah Study for at least 22 years, says, “I’ve met wonderful people and learned a lot from them. And I love when I get to chant a few verses from the portion to start each session.” **Howard Wexler**, a Torah Study regular for nearly two decades, finds that “people bring interesting perspectives. Each year, I get to focus on new material and ideas.”

**Other programs also create opportunities to learn in community.** Adult Hebrew classes enable congregants to develop and sharpen their prayerbook

Hebrew literacy. **Cantor Toby Glaser’s** adult b. mitzvah program will culminate in a Shabbat morning service at which each participant will choose a reading from *Mishkan T’filah* and chant a verse or more of Torah. Our Introduction to Judaism course offers a gateway for prospective Jews-by-choice, as well as a chance for members to acquaint (or reacquaint) themselves with the basics of Reform Judaism. Judaism 201, a new class beginning this spring, will offer congregants a deeper look into Judaism’s core concepts.

In November, rabbinic intern **George Altshuler** welcomed adult students to the chapel for a three-week course, “The Divine Symphony,” which led **Linda Fries** to comment, “I was impressed with George’s open, engaging manner. We never had a dull moment.” ■



## VOICES from CSI Communities

### JULIE HOUSE FOR THE BOOK CLUB

“We’ve read about ten books a year since 2009. Our books have to have Jewish content; having a Jewish author is not enough. We rotate discussion leaders. We have some brilliant readers and people who’ve been to places we’ve read about. We’ve had amazing, sometimes heated, discussions, formed friendships and enhanced friendships we already had.”

*Held monthly on Zoom, the Book Club is open to all Sherith Israel members. Books for the coming year are chosen each June.*

#### Book Club Recommendations:

*The Hare with Amber Eyes*  
by Edmund de Waal

*City of Thieves* by David Benioff

*He, She, It* by Marge Piercy

*A Tale of Love and Darkness*  
by Amos Oz

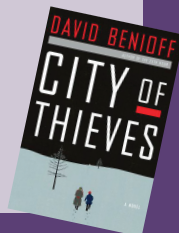
*To the End of the Land*  
by David Grossman

*Journey to the End of the Millennium* by A.B. Yehoshua

*Apeirogon* by Colum McCann

*People Love Dead Jews*  
by Dara Horn

*For a list of upcoming books, see page 8.*



### RUTH AND RICHARD ROZEN FOR MOVIE GROUP 2

**Richard:** “The combination of seeing Sherith Israel friends and discussing a good movie is unbeatable. I don’t think of film as a Jewish art form, but it’s hard not to use a Jewish lens to filter what we see, especially around history and ethics. We’ve done a lot on civil rights.”

**Ruth:** “It’s been an opportunity to meet members of the synagogue whom we didn’t know. You strike up friendships and you learn things about people. I think small groups are a great way to make a large community smaller.”

*Two CSI movie groups engage in quasi-Talmudic discussions of current or classic films.*





*Shared interests*

## AFFINITY GROUPS LEAD TO FRIENDSHIPS

What's Jewish about listening to jazz, discussing crime fiction, pedaling a Peloton or creating the perfect cocktail?

If you're a member of one of Sherith Israel's affinity groups, it's sharing your enthusiasm with other CSI members. It's also the excitement of meeting new friends and discovering old friends in new ways.

The groups were the brainchild of former board president **Lindsay Braunig**, who says she originally intended to create more traditional *chavurot*, small groups based around ages and stages. "When the pandemic intervened and everything had to be over Zoom, I thought groups based around shared interests would be more interesting and engaging." The first round of affinity groups started in 2021.

**Lindsay believes that "affinity groups give Sherith Israel members new opportunities to join together around a shared interest.** Being open to members from across the congregation, they offer a wonderful way for people who might not otherwise meet to build real friendships." Lindsay leads a Peloton group that has been going for almost two years. "Until our youngest member turned 40, we had people on the 'leaderboard' who were in their 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s." The groups now include passions ranging from crime novels and jazz to hiking, mixology, and cooking and baking. Some affinity groups meet regularly, others when opportunities present themselves.

**Eric Safire, a criminal defense attorney in real life, co-chairs the crime fiction group, one of the original affinity groups that is still going strong.** "The crime fiction group has enabled me to meet new members and make new friends. I'm pleased to learn that fellow congregants share the same 'lurid and offbeat' diversions." Another "crime dog," **Greg Tolson**, likes the group because it includes people he knew before but only saw at services. "Now I can be with them on a different plane." He enjoys the fact that several group members are experienced criminal defense attorneys, which adds real-world expertise and insights to the crime novel discussions. Greg, a CSI congregant for almost 40 years, says being a member of the group has cemented his connection to Sherith Israel. "When I go to services and see people, I feel that I know them."



**I'LL TAKE MANHATTAN(S):** Mixology maven **Erik Migdail** puts the finishing touches on a round of cocktails for the mixology affinity group. In addition to showing how to make popular cocktails, Erik leads discussions on essential ingredients and tools. The group includes **Josh Black, Warren Braunig, Mike Feldman, Stacie Katz, Michael Moss** and **Sarah Pelzner**.

The mixology group has been exploring the history of mixed drinks, starting with punch (the original mixed drink), followed by the Martinez—the precursor of the Martini—and the Manhattan. They've also discussed the "essential bottles and tools for home mixologists," according to CSI board secretary **Erik Migdail**, who leads the group. Erik says it has been everything these groups should be. "Aside from mixing up beverages, we are also mixing up the typical social connections at CSI. The company has been even more delicious than the drinks." ■

*News you can use: Erik's magic Martini formula—two dashes orange bitters, two ounces Beefeater gin and one ounce Dolin dry vermouth. Garnish with two green olives.*

### GALE GOTTLIEB FOR THE MEMOIR GROUP

"All of us have lived lives of importance. Our lives and experiences have value. Every two weeks—without prompts or suggestions—we share what we have written, from high school experiences to profound losses. We're always happy to get together. It's been a wonderful experience."

*Gale initiated the Memoir Group prior to the pandemic. This group is now closed, but Gale would be delighted to help others start new memoir groups. Contact: [galegott@aol.com](mailto:galegott@aol.com).*



**VOICES from CSI Communities**



*Ages and Stages*

## GATHERING WITH PEERS

Hanging out with peers offers congregants a time-honored way to make friends. After all, you have lots

in common. Sherith Israel's community of communities embraces a number of age-based groups for socializing with a Jewish perspective.

### YAP—YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

The twenties—and even the thirties—can be an awkward age in synagogue life. You've long since finished religious school. You've graduated from college and are embarking on your career. You may be new to the area or a longtime resident looking for new friends. Jewish friends. That's where YAP comes in.

"It's a comfortable way to tiptoe back to Judaism," says **Talia Banarie**, CSI director of member engagement. She coordinates YAP events with **Cantor Toby Glaser**. "We have 91 people in the database, 39 of whom are members." She notes that a majority of the people that come to YAP events are too young to run for president, *i.e.*, under 35.

The core of the program is the third-Friday YAP Late Shabbat with dinner at eight and a short service at 8:30, followed by an oneg with dessert and drinks. The Friday dinners and services have been hugely successful, averaging more than 30 participants. "The best indicator that we're doing something right is that people ask their friends to come along," says Talia. "People aren't inviting their friends to a bad shindig." Other gatherings have included meetups at Fillmore Street cafes and bars, and outings to the Academy of Sciences, the Exploratorium and to see comedian **Jenny Slate**.

"It's all about hanging out and being Jewish together," notes Talia. "People are going to laugh at your Jewish jokes. You cannot underestimate the value and importance of that." Adds Cantor Glaser, "When people come to the synagogue, they're looking for an experience. If they've never been in our building before, they are blown away by the amazing space. They are building a community."

### PARENTS OF SHERITH ISRAEL TEENS AND TWEENS

"When we show up on Yom Kippur, we all want familiar people to sit with," says CSI board member **Maacah Marah**. The mom of a seventh-grader and a tenth-grader enrolled in Studio, Maacah organized the teen parenting group last fall. "It's good to know the parents of the people your children spend time with. Once your kids are tweens and teens, they hardly introduce you to their friends, let alone their friends' parents."

The parent group meets for dinner on the first Friday night each month to coincide with Teens at Studio and SITY (Sherith Israel Temple Youth) activities. The agenda: fun.

"Everybody's plate is full and there's a lot of seriousness in the world right now," says Maacah. "We also didn't get much



**THE AGENDA IS FUN:** Maacah Marah (standing) and other parents of teens and tweens meet monthly for conversation, trivia games and dinner while their students are in Friday evening classes. (From left) **Jeni Clancy**, **Jenny Benjamin**, **Steve Weston** and **Jeremy Benjamin**.

of a normal bonding experience with other parents because of the pandemic years." She notes that many parents in the group have stressful jobs. "Sometimes we just need to laugh," she says, recalling the evening they played '80s charades and one of the groups acted out *Buns of Steel*.

### GEN-X SOCIAL CLUB

With YAP programming going strong at CSI, the Gen-X crowd, born between 1965 and 1985, also wanted some CSI-based social time. Executive director **Gordon Gladstone** and board member and membership maven **Christina Jefferson** got together with Maacah Marah and others to organize some initial activities.

"The group is still evolving as we learn more about people's interests," says Maacah. "Right now we're trying to do a casual bar meetup once a month. We try to go to a different historic or unique San Francisco bar each time." Outings have taken the Gen-Xers to a brewery in the Bayview that supports the community and to the last lesbian bar in the city. They are still trying to stay outside as Covid takes its time receding. The group also plans arts and culture events, like Shakespeare in the Park, or a jazz and chocolate night with singer **Noa Levy** and her husband, **Ben Glass**, founder of The Good Chocolate.

Maacah explains the push to create social sub-communities within Sherith Israel as a desire to enrich our relationships with other members. "With so many people in our community worried about the state of the world, we're all busy trying to do the work of tikkun olam. We're voting, we're writing postcards, we're cooking for the hungry, we're going to social action events, we're donating money, we're donating our time," she says. "Coming together to have a drink and a laugh with other people who support you and share your understanding of the world can refresh your spirit. It's our way of recreating a village." ■





## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH GORDON GLADSTONE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### INVOLVEMENT STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY

Several years (and one synagogue) ago, I was working out the details for holding High Holiday services in an LDS church. The congregation had provided us with two members to be our points of contact, and we sat down together to talk about logistics. I was stunned to learn that they had no paid staff. Their congregation embraced hundreds of families, and the campus was large, with a sanctuary/social hall that could hold almost 1,000 people. But they didn't even have a custodial crew. Every single task, from clergy to lawn mowing, was done by members of the congregation. It was clear to me that the growth and cohesion of LDS communities might have more to do with this total engagement in the life of the congregation—from the sacred to the mundane—than with their missionaries in white shirts.

When I think about the challenges that face us at Sherith Israel, including how to create a more cohesive community, I am reminded of the commitment of the members of that LDS congregation. We are all responsible for working to create a community we value, enjoy and find meaningful. While the model of most synagogues is to hire professional staff to see to the day-to-day operations of the synagogue, it is the role of volunteers that moves us from good to great.

At Sherith Israel, volunteers complement the work of the professional staff in many critical ways. Some of that work is highly professional—our infrastructure committee, budget and finance committee, and this newsletter. Much of what volunteers do is programmatic, from the hundreds of HaMotzi/Chicken Soupers volunteers to the social action and Chesed committees to the Koleynu choir. Sherith Israel would not be Sherith Israel without the thousands of hours of volunteer involvement.

Volunteers can also activate their peer groups and generate enthusiasm for programs and events in ways that staff never will be able to. In turn, that volunteer engagement helps foster a sense of communal cohesion that leads to more people activating *their* networks. The degree to which members encourage their friends and families to join our community can be decisive.

**In 2023, make a resolution to get involved.** You could join a committee, cook with HaMotzi or be a greeter at services. However you contribute, it will strengthen the entire community. ■



#### VOICES from CSI Communities

##### MERLE KOVTUN FOR KOLEYNU

“I'm not a Torah Study guy. I'm a singing guy. You have to find your spot. A lot of people have been in the choir for 20-plus years. It is a family group. We're broken into four groups of different voices. Listening to the other groups sing is just so wonderful. I feel really connected to them.”

*Koleynu, our volunteer choir, is an integral part of our High Holiday, Shabbat and festival services.  
Contact: Cantor Toby Glaser, [tglaser@sherithisrael.org](mailto:tglaser@sherithisrael.org).*



#### Building alliances between broader communities

### RABBI GRAF JOINS JCRC TRIP FOR JEWISH, AAPI LEADERS

Rabbi Jessica Graf is one of two Bay Area rabbis invited to join a March delegation to Washington, D.C. for local Jewish and Asian-American Pacific Islander leaders. They will discuss common challenges faced by the two communities with White House and other officials.

Rabbi Graf is “honored to represent our community on this significant trip.” She adds, “It's very powerful that our community is joining the AAPI community in San Francisco to fight the plague of hate. These are two parallel, vibrant communities that share a lot of issues.”

In their White House talks, the group will focus on “secu-

arity, immigration and addressing hate,” according to Jessica Trubowitch, director of policy and partnerships for the Jewish Community Relations Council. The trip was organized by JCRC and the API Council.

Before the White House meeting, the group will spend time in New York City, visiting Chinatown and the Tenement Museum. In Washington, they'll see the Holocaust Museum and the Japanese-American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II. By exploring the past, present and future of Jews and Asians in America, the trip aims to build strong, permanent relationships between the two communities and their member organizations. ■



# WHAT'S HAPPENING

For more information on upcoming events, visit our online event calendar at [sherithisrael.org/calendar](http://sherithisrael.org/calendar). Check Under the Dome for event reminders and announcements. *Questions? Contact program manager Peter Bonos, [programs@sherithisrael.org](mailto:programs@sherithisrael.org) or 415.346.1720, x124.*

## Shabbat

### FRIDAY EVENINGS

#### 6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat

##### *In person in our historic sanctuary*

Welcome Shabbat with Rabbi Jessica Graf, Cantor Toby Glaser, rabbinic intern George Altshuler and musical director Jonathan Dimmock. *Also streams on YouTube.*

## Special Shabbats

### YAP LATE SHABBAT

*Young adults, ages 20-40*

**Third Fridays, Feb. 17, Mar. 17,**

**April 21, May 19**

#### 8 pm: Dinner

Nosh and mingle with Cantor Toby Glaser and our young adult community.

#### 8:30 pm: Services

Celebrate Shabbat at our monthly third-Friday Late Shabbat led by Cantor Glaser. Followed by an oneg with dessert and drinks. *Dinner: free; register at [sherithisrael.org/yap](http://sherithisrael.org/yap)*

### HIAS REFUGEE SHABBAT

**Friday, Feb. 3, 6 pm**

As a sanctuary congregation, we reaffirm our active support for immigrants and welcome guest speakers Kateryna Holub and Oleksandr Zemliachenko, who fled Ukraine and settled in California to rebuild their lives with support from Sherith Israel's social action Committee.

### SHABBAT PURIM

**Friday, March 3, 6 pm**

Join us for the year's most fun, short and silly Kabbalat Shabbat service with an original Purim spiel created by Cantor Toby Glaser and our Koleynu choir.

### KABBALAT SHABBAT

#### WITH SAUL KAYE

**Friday, March 10**

#### 6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat

#### 7:15 pm: Oneg

#### 7:30 pm: Jewish Blues concert

Interweaving stories and songs from his personal life, spiritual path and art, guitarist and vocalist Saul Kaye presents *Jewish Blues*, a marriage of Jewish history, characters and liturgy with the blues.

### CONFIRMATION SHABBAT

**Friday, May 19**

#### 6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat

#### 7:15 pm: Community dinner

Join our confirmation class as they celebrate the completion of their religious school studies. Confirmands Zack Bayrer, Gabriel Benjamin, Paige Clancy, Henry

Flaherman, Zachary Kamil, Dahlia Kelly, Ayelet Passman-Lapushin and Asher Weston will help lead the service and speak about what Judaism means to them. *Dinner registration: \$18.*

### CANTOR FELDMAN SHABBAT

**Friday, June 2**

#### 6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat honoring

Cantor Emeritus Martin and Nancy Feldman

#### 7:15 pm:

Festive Oneg  
(with cake!)



## Saturday Mornings

### TORAH STUDY

**9:15 am on Zoom**

Discuss the weekly Torah portion with clergy, congregants and guests.

### B. MITZVAH CEREMONIES

**Select Saturdays, 10:30 am** (unless noted otherwise). In-person attendance by invitation only. *Streams on YouTube for members and friends.*

**Feb. 11: Jake Bayrer**

**Feb. 25, 4 pm: Aliza Kaushanskiy**

**April 8: Adult b. mitzvah cohort**

## Groups and Classes

### LUNCH 'N' LEARN

**Third Thursdays, 12:30 pm in Bart Hall**

Nosh, schmooze and discuss current events and other topics with clergy and staff. Catered by One Market Restaurant/Mark and Mike's NY-style deli. Sponsored by Monica Levin and Nancy Igdaloff. *Members only. Free. Reserve your seat by the Monday prior at [sherithisrael.org](http://sherithisrael.org).*

**Jan. 19: Cantor Toby Glaser**

**Feb. 16: Rabbi Jessica Graf**

**March 16: Rabbinic intern**

**George Altshuler**

**April 20: Gordon Gladstone**

**May 18: Jonathan Emanuel**

### JUDAISM 201

**Rabbi Jessica Graf and rabbinic intern George Altshuler**

**Wednesdays, 7 pm, March 15-April 26**

If you know what a mitzvah, Purim and kiddush are, but you're a little fuzzy on Tisha B'Av, the Talmud and the different parts of the *Amidah*, this could be the class for you. Judaism 201 is for congregants who know the basics about Judaism, but want to go deeper. The class will cover topics such as prayer, holidays and Shabbat. *Free.*

### INTRODUCTORY HEBREW

**Noa Levy**

**Wednesdays, 7 pm, Feb. 15-May 3, in person**

Participants learn the alef-bet and reading Hebrew, and gain familiarity with the prayerbook, basic blessings and core parts of the liturgy. No prior knowledge required. *Registration: Free for members; \$180 for public. Information: Noa Levy, [noalevy8@gmail.com](mailto:noalevy8@gmail.com).*

### ADULT INTERMEDIATE HEBREW

**Noa Levy**

**Sundays, 1-2 pm, on Zoom**

Dive into decoding the language behind the prayers and blessings of the Siddur. Learn essential vocabulary and Hebrew grammar basics to better understand and explore new meanings behind our ancient texts. *Information: Noa Levy, [noalevy8@gmail.com](mailto:noalevy8@gmail.com).*

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

#### FIRST-AID TRAINING

**Wednesday, March 29, 10 am-4 pm**

The training is designed to teach youth professionals, parents, caregivers, teachers, school staff, neighbors and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) experiencing a mental health or addiction crisis. *Register at [tfaforms.com/4996779](http://tfaforms.com/4996779). Facilitated by Deb Massey, [deb@jewishlearning.works](mailto:deb@jewishlearning.works)*

### JEWISH BOOK CLUB

**4th Monday of the month**

**4 pm, on Zoom**

Participants discuss books of Jewish interest (paperbacks and ebooks only). *Information: Julie Lekach House, [juliehousesf@gmail.com](mailto:juliehousesf@gmail.com).*

**Jan. 30: *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust—Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind's Darkest Hour* by James Grymes**

**Feb. 27: *36 Arguments for the Existence of God* by Rebecca Goldstein**

**March 27: *The World to Come* by Dara Horn**

**April 24: *The Man Who Sold Air in the Holy Land* by Omer Friedlander**

**May 22: *Track Changes* by Sayed Kashua**

**June 26: Book-selection session**



## PURIM SPIEL AND CARNIVAL

Sunday, March 5

Shake your groggers and strut your inner Mordechai or Esther at our annual Purim festivities!

**10:30 am: Purim Spiel with Better Together in the Sanctuary**

Join Teens@Studio and their Better Together senior buddies for a rousing spiel, directed by Ana Dillman.

**11 am–12:30 pm: Purim Carnival for all ages in Newman Hall**

Carnival proceeds support SITY, Sherith Israel's teen youth group.

*Register at [sherithisrael.org](http://sherithisrael.org). Carnival tickets available online and at the door, and may be exchanged for food or games.*

## Festivals and Holidays

### TU B'SHVAT

Sunday, Feb. 5, 11 am

Tu B'Shvat or the "New Year of the Trees" is Jewish Arbor Day. Celebrate with Studio@Sherith and Isaac Zones, a musician specializing in Jewish spiritual, folk and family music.

### SECOND-NIGHT PASSOVER SEDER

Thursday, April 6, 6 pm, Newman Hall

Celebrate Passover at our welcoming, family-friendly second-night seder with Rabbi Jessica Graf, Cantor Toby Glaser, rabbinic intern George Altshuler and our climate action team. As we recall our ancestors' liberation from bondage and historic flight to freedom, we recognize that famine and food insecurity drove the Israelites to Egypt. The Seder raises funds for our keystone Chicken Soupers and HaMotzi programs that feed homebound seniors, those in need of healing and residents of local shelters. *Information: [programs@sherithisrael.org](mailto:programs@sherithisrael.org).*

**Please donate generously:**

**\$250** provides sandwiches for children at Compass Family Services or milk at both shelters for a month

**\$500** provides fresh fruit for shelter residents, Chesed and Chicken Soupers recipients for a month

**\$1000** provides protein for the shelters, Chesed and Chicken Soupers for a month

**\$3,600** provides disposable individual portion containers and PPE for volunteers for a year

### YOM HAZIKARON— ISRAELI MEMORIAL DAY COMMEMORATION

Wednesday, April 26, 7:30 pm, Sanctuary

Unite with the people of Israel in commemorating the legacy and sacrifice of fallen soldiers and terror victims. Join us for a meaningful event with songs and personal stories to celebrate the lives of the ones we have lost and to show our gratitude and respect. *Co-sponsored by the Israeli American Council and Israel Consulate General to the Pacific Northwest.*

## Musical Events

### SONGS OF THE JEWISH UKRAINIAN HEARTLAND

Saturday, March 11, 7:30 pm

Michael Alpert, Sasha Lurje and Craig Judelman

As war rages on, we join together to sing songs and tell stories of one of the main homelands of Yiddishkeit. Old songs of forbidden loves, boy soldiers, the wonders of nature and looming dangers are always relevant. Ukraine also was the source of our most important collections of old-time klezmer tunes. Three of the world's most in-demand Klezmer musicians, Michael Alpert, Sasha Lurje and Craig Judelman, bring together a diverse repertoire to paint a picture of Jewish life in Ukraine.

### SEPHARDIC MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sunday afternoon, May 21, 2–9 pm

Enjoy cultural presentations, workshops and performances. *More information: [programs@sherithisrael.org](mailto:programs@sherithisrael.org). Co-produced by Our Sephardic Family and Anatolian Arts Institute.*

## Events

### DISCO GOLD RUSH GALA

Saturday, May 6, 6:30–10 pm

*We Shake Our Groove Thing* while raising funds for Sherith Israel. Enjoy hearty appetizers, an open bar, dancing and a community dessert buffet. New this year: enticing bargains at our online and live auctions. Separate activities for kids under 21. Join the fun because *We are Family*. *Sponsorships and tickets on sale February 1 at [sherithisrael.org/gala](http://sherithisrael.org/gala). Questions, thoughts, ideas for high-ticket auction items? Contact: Talia Banarie, [tbanarie@sherithisrael.org](mailto:tbanarie@sherithisrael.org) or 415.346.1720, x117.*

### CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 23

**6 pm: dinner; 6:30 pm: meeting**  
**In person in Newman Hall with Zoom option**

Learn about the state of the congregation in this year of post-pandemic growth. *For members only.*

## Volunteer Opportunities

### HAMOTZI & CHICKEN SOUPERS

HaMotzi:

Sundays, 9:30 am–12:30 pm

Chicken Soupers:

Sundays, monthly, noon–3 pm

Feb. 5, Mar. 5, April 2, May 7

**In person in Newman Hall**

Each week HaMotzi volunteers prepare healthy meals for two San Francisco shelters. Chicken Soupers cook and deliver meals monthly for clients of Jewish Family and Children's Services. Donations of homemade baked goods encouraged. *Contact: Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, [hamotzi@sherithisrael.org](mailto:hamotzi@sherithisrael.org), to arrange a volunteer shift, shop, pick up donations, cook or deliver food.*

### CHESD COMMITTEE

Stand with congregants in times of need, celebration or transition to sustain the warmth and inclusiveness we value at Sherith Israel. *If you or someone you know in the congregation can benefit from support, or you can offer food, supplies or phone support, contact Talia Banarie, [tbanarie@sherithisrael.org](mailto:tbanarie@sherithisrael.org) or 415.346.1720, x117.*

### SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

Help support immigrants and refugees, and advocate for senior and homeless housing. *Information: Karen Alschuler, [kalschuler@gmail.com](mailto:kalschuler@gmail.com), or Stacy Passman, [spassman@gmail.com](mailto:spassman@gmail.com). See Tikkun Olam Corner, page 13, for current activities.*



*Finding a home at Sherith Israel*

### PROFILE: DOUG GOULD AND PAULINE EVEILLARD

Many of us recall what first attracted us to Congregation Sherith Israel and why we make it a second home. For Doug Gould and Pauline Eveillard, there's no question: Sherith Israel is the welcoming community they want for themselves and their two young daughters—five-year-old Greta and three-year-old Laura. And they want other young families—especially interfaith families like theirs—to feel the same way.

"I'm confident that once people can get in the door and see what Sherith Israel is like, meet Rabbi Jessica Graf and other families, they will also realize it's a special place," Doug says. Adds Pauline: "Beautiful things happen in this gorgeous space."

Doug and Pauline are committed to keeping that door open wide. Count them among the many highly committed CSI congregants who champion the inclusiveness and unconditional acceptance that reflect Sherith Israel's core values.

Says Doug: "I knew that Sherith Israel was going to be a big part of our lives and I wanted to see what more I could do." Currently Doug serves on the board of trustees and co-chairs the preschool committee with Lindsay Braunig. He's also chair of the Littles Committee, which helps Sherith Littles provide Jewish programming for families with babies, toddlers and preschoolers.

Doug is enthused about Sherith Israel's first preschool class, which will begin this fall. Director Carolyn Mulcahy is leading an innovative, environmentally based approach to early childhood education. Children will spend much of their class time outdoors, forming an awareness of the earth and the responsibility to care for it. The new preschool, Doug says, will be "an inviting pipeline for young families to become members and sustain the congregation."

Doug and Pauline discovered Sherith Israel shortly after they moved from New York to San Francisco in 2014. Doug is a senior manager at Zoox, an autonomous vehicle startup. Pauline at that time was working for a nonprofit dedicated to international heritage-site conservation. Since 2017, she's run an online retail business, Soukra.co, which showcases Tunisian designers. The business emerged from Pauline's art history background and time in Tunisia as a Fulbright Scholar.

The couple didn't have close friends or family in San Francisco, so finding a Jewish community was a priority. Their introduction to the congregation came during the High Holidays. For both Pauline and Doug, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur at Sherith Israel was a new experience. While both are from New York, the similarities in their backgrounds end there. Doug grew up in a Conservative Jewish family in Great Neck on Long Island and attended a Conservative synagogue; Pauline was raised in a Protestant family in Manhattan and has not converted.

Sherith Israel and Reform Judaism embraced them as they are. "It very quickly felt like the right place," Doug says. Pauline remembers enjoying the Argentine cantors singing in Spanish during High Holiday services a few years ago. The international flavor of the service spoke to her, demonstrating "an openness that was the opposite of rigidity."

Pauline and Doug are raising their children Jewish. This engaged them with Sherith Israel in an even more meaningful way when both daughters had *simchat bat*—baby-naming—ceremonies in the sanctuary. Rabbi Graf was and continues to be a close confidant on the couple's parenting journey—Jessica's son Zach was at the same preschool as Pauline and Doug's daughters. Says Pauline: "We talk to her about interfaith marriage and coming to the sanctuary as a Christian, but raising a Jewish household."

During the December holidays last year, the couple found themselves facing their child's genuine curiosity about why Pauline's parents celebrate Christmas, but their family doesn't. Jessica offered suggestions for Doug and Pauline to give honest, child-centered answers. "She's been a guiding light," Pauline says about Rabbi Graf, "creating a safe space for us to open up and talk about difficult things."

Pauline and Doug's service to Sherith Israel is immersive and easy to understand when you learn that they met as volunteers. Both attended Tufts University at the same time but didn't know each other. Several years later, they were on a committee to plan an event for young New York alumni—a fundraiser to encourage alums to start giving to their alma mater, with no amount too small.

Says Doug: "You have to work at creating community. You can't take it for granted." ■

**ALL IN:** Doug Gould and Pauline Eveillard not only made Sherith Israel a home for them and their daughters, Greta and Laura, they became involved from the get-go. Doug serves on the board of trustees and co-chairs the preschool committee with Lindsay Braunig.





**J**ust in from **Gordon Gladstone**, CSI executive director: During the recent deluge a man with a beard and a staff was ticketed for parking his imposing ark in the white zone in front of Sherith Israel. “He just kept arguing with me about whether his creatures were truly ‘support’ animals.” Hmmm. ...

In actual news, **Gordon** was elected vice president of strategic engagement for the National Association for Temple Administration. His three-year term began January 1. By the way, what’s “strategic engagement”? ...

**Nancy Sheftel-Gomes** reports that HaMotzi brought 500 delicious holiday meals to our partners: The San Francisco Interfaith Winter Shelter, Compass Family Services, The Women’s Place and members of our Chesed community. The effort of love was accomplished by about 50 volunteers, including a dozen Sherith Israel youth and returning college students. Many of our volunteers were first-timers, along with friends of HaMotzi/Chicken Soupers for whom volunteering during the holidays is a tradition. The beautiful cookies made by Sherith Israel bakers were a highlight of the menu. ...

**K**velling grandparents: **Judie** and **Howard Wexler** went to see SF Ballet’s *The Nutcracker* twice because their grandson **Mateo**, in his first year at the San Francisco Ballet School, was cast in the party scene. Mateo performed in half of the 36 performances, including opening and closing nights. “We are so proud,” beamed Judie. ...

**L**eslie and **Merle Rabine** spent Chanukah in Senegal. “Senegalese Muslims have never met a holiday they don’t love,” says Leslie, who has researched fashion, graffiti art and youth culture in Senegal since 1992. The family of their godson held a Chanukah party. “We waited until they finished evening prayers to light candles in my Loch Ness Monster travel hanukiah. Since we couldn’t make latkes, my friend made a Senegalese dish of fried chicken cubes in

a spicy sauce, which we ate in Senegalese communal style, sitting on the floor around a common bowl.” A truly international celebration. ...

**T**ea time: **Rabbi Jessica Graf** joined **Paul** and **Lynn Sedway**, **Laura** and **Steve Olson**, **Joan** and **Stephen Fierberg**, and **Judi Ellman** and **Gordon Harris** for afternoon tea and delicious opera cake at the Towers. “It was lovely to catch up,” reported Rabbi Graf. ...

**CSI** authors hard at work: Last year **Erin Gordon** released the Lake Lyla series of contemporary romances, *Summer Sky*, *Autumn Sky* and *Winter Sky*, about three sisters in a fictional lake town based on Lake Tahoe. The series was written under Erin’s pen name, Jenna Starly. She is currently working on a memoir—written under her own name—of her first year as a young, female lawyer in 1993. ...

**D**avid **Perlstein**, author of *Lola Flores*, about a Jewish trans Havana nightclub star of the 1930s, is finishing *The Short (Pun Intended) Redemptive Life of Little Ned*. The novel follows three struggling young Jews from 1903 to 1920 in what David calls “the underside of the Eastern European Jewish immigrant experience.” San Francisco’s 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition plays a pivotal role, as do vaudeville, magic, a mastery of horses, silent movies and criminal behavior. David hopes to bring *Little Ned* out in June. ...

**S**teve **Wasserman** recently spoke about his Holocaust memoir, *Grasping at Straws: Letters from the Holocaust*, at the Kristallnacht remembrance event presented by the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys. Steve is working on a biography of one of his aunts, a world-renowned concert violinist in the 1930s and 1940s. She played at Radio City, Carnegie Hall and hundreds of venues across the country. The book will be available in a few months. ...

**M**eanwhile, longtime artist **Richard Rozen** co-curated an art exhibit, *Connections: Art & Music—Art You Can Hear, Music You Can See*, at the Belvedere Tiburon Library’s art gallery. The art is interactive; each piece has a QR code so you can hear the music that inspired the art on your cell phone. The exhibit runs through March 10, with some special talks and events. ...

**M**azel tov to **Sharon** and **Steve Wasserman’s** daughter, **Allie Wasserman**, who was recently named one of “Hollywood’s New Leaders” by *Variety*. She was recognized for her work as an executive in HBO’s comedy division, where she develops new programming for all of us to watch. ...

**C**ongrats to **Sylvia Benjamin**, daughter of **Jeremy** and **Jenny Benjamin**, and granddaughter of **Richard** and **Ruth Rozen**. She was accepted to Temple University’s 3+3 Physical Therapy Track, which enables her to complete her undergraduate degree in three years and become a provisional candidate in the university’s PT doctoral program. If all goes as planned, Sylvia will graduate in 2027 with her doctorate in physical therapy. ...

**A**den **Diaz**, grandson of **Bill** and **Shira Shore**, and **Nancy Flaxman** and **Lila McCarthy**, played in an under-12 baseball tournament in the Dominican Republic over Martin Luther King weekend. Aden’s team, the New York Gothams, donated gear and clothing to the hosting Dominican squads. ...

**A**dulding: A new cohort of religious school graduates—**Asher Etlin**, **Abe Feldman**, **Ollie Feldman** and **Jake Himmelstein**—turns 21 this winter and spring. Once you are legal, the YAP crew is looking forward to seeing you at a YAP event later this year. ...

*By the News Nosh, aka Ellen Newman.*  
Please send bits and bites of gossip to [ellennewman@earthlink.net](mailto:ellennewman@earthlink.net). Be sure to put “News Nosh” in the subject line.



*In-person learning returns*

## STUDIO BUILDS COMMUNITY FOR CSI TEENS

**"Our teens feel that Sherith Israel is their home. They come and hang out, which is stunning,"** notes Judie Wexler, congregational president and a longtime educator.

The pandemic made it difficult to make in-person connections at CSI, but that's changing. "Studio is bringing students back into the building," says education director **Jonathan Emanuel**, "and for kids and teens, that's critical." Jonathan cites social opportunities—students want to keep friendships and make new ones. Studio kicked off the school year with a pre-Rosh Hashanah student-family picnic at Presidio Tunnel Tops park overlooking the Golden Gate. "We've also held a number of holiday celebrations like Sukkot and a multi-generational Chanukah to bring all the kids into the larger community," says Jonathan.

Jonathan considers Sherith Israel a soulful community. "Congregants of all ages are really interested in learning and celebrating together. It feels like family here. This is the third urban synagogue I've worked in, and Sherith Israel feels like an oasis in the middle of a big, bustling city."

### FRIDAY NIGHT TEENS @ STUDIO

"It's essential to engage post-b. mitzvah kids," Jonathan maintains, since Jewish learning is lifelong and social connections are critical. A typical Friday night starts around 5 pm when the teens start to arrive. They raid the snack cabinet in Labe Lounge, hang out and work on jigsaw puzzles, and joust with paper-towel tubes. At 6, they all go up to the sanctuary for Shabbat services. Says **Natalie Connell**, youth programs director, "We're changing the culture of what happens at services on Fridays because now there is an expectation that the teens are there."

After services, students have dinner, then class. Grades 6-8 are following the Jewish Lens Curriculum, which explores Jewish values and community through photography. They are snapping shots of their experiences in the building with Studio alum and long-time Studio educator **Kaitlin Wahl**. At the end of the project, the teens will pair their images with prayerbook quotes for a gallery-style exhibit. Grades 10-12 are learning about spirituality with Jonathan and co-teacher **Barbie Kamiel**.

"The way our teens treat each other is the way I wish the rest of the world would be," says Natalie. "They are so good to each other. They listen and honor each other for who they are."

Reaching beyond home base and Friday nights, CSI teens have expanded their horizons with ice skating at Yerba Buena Center and an exploration of Fillmore Street. They have also connected with other teens through Midrasha, high-school level retreats for Bay Area Jewish teens that meet three times a year. Most exciting, in February, Natalie and Kaitlin will join **Rabbi Jessica Graf** leading a trip to Washington, D.C. Participating



**BETTER TOGETHER:** Rita Jeremy (left) and Studio student **Dahlia Kelly** enjoy a moment together at Sherith Israel's Chanukah celebration. They are part of the Better Together program, which pairs Sherith Israel teens with senior congregants. In addition to socializing and studying together, the teens and their senior partners are writing this year's Purim spiel.

students will gain new perspectives on social-justice work from the Reform movement's Religious Action Center and visit the office of **Rep. Nancy Pelosi**.

### BETTER TOGETHER FOR TEENS AND SENIORS

Sherith Israel has been selected to participate in Better Together, a four-year grant-supported program designed to encourage meaningful interaction between young and old. "Teens and seniors both were isolated by Covid," says Jonathan, "and we're establishing a whole new set of relationships."

Sixth–12th graders, under Natalie's direction, will participate in the program with senior congregants. Chesed Committee members **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes** and **Janet Parker** coordinate the seniors' side of the program. The core project, besides socializing and learning together, involves collaborating on the Purim spiel to be presented Sunday, March 5, before the annual Purim carnival. For Pesach, the group will go to Color Me Mine to paint Seder plates. Looking ahead to next year, Natalie, Janet and Nancy are considering a group trip to Los Angeles.

### CSI'S TEEN MENTAL-HEALTH FIRST-AID TRAINING

Guided by Natalie, Sherith Israel is the first Bay Area synagogue certified by the National Council of Mental Wellbeing as a teen mental-health first-aid site. Natalie, Jonathan, several teachers and congregants have been certified in youth mental-health first-aid, which teaches trusted adults the skills and resources to help teens through mental-health struggles.

*Interested adults can become certified at Sherith Israel on March 29 through a free, all-day training. Contact: Natalie Connell, [nconnell@sherithisrael.org](mailto:nconnell@sherithisrael.org).* ■



# SHERITH ISRAEL PRESCHOOL

Nature-Based with Jewish Roots

*Tours, registration to begin late January*

## CSI PRESCHOOL ON TRACK FOR FALL OPENING

CSI preschool director Carolyn Mulcahy is excited that all the details of the Sherith Israel preschool's opening next fall are coming together. Registration for next fall's semester will open on February 2, and families can set up individual tours beginning the same day.

The remodeled preschool classrooms are nearly complete. "I'd like families to see the intention and careful planning that went into getting these rooms ready," says Carolyn. "It's set up so that children can learn through play. The intent is to create a warm, inviting environment, as opposed to a traditional institutional classroom." Cece Kaufman-Himelstein helped design the space.

The tuition schedule will be comparable to that of other Jewish preschool programs in the area. Carolyn is delighted that the generosity of CSI board members and congregants has created a scholarship fund that will ensure that the program is inclusive, regardless of families' ability to pay.

Carolyn believes that CSI's preschool program—"nature based with Jewish roots"—is unique in several respects. Most of the program will take place outside with an emphasis on the Jewish value of environmental stewardship. Carolyn is working on permits from the City to use both Lafayette Park and Alta Plaza.

The other unique aspect of the preschool program is its integration with other CSI family and child-oriented programming. Carolyn is working closely with education director Jonathan Emanuel to make sure there is continuity from the preschool program to Studio. "We want the language we use, the values, rituals and songs to be consistent." She adds that Jonathan expects to be in the preschool frequently. Carolyn has also hired Ana Dillman, a congregant and Studio teacher, as a Jewish resource specialist. "We are going to be doing joint activities with Studio," she adds. She and Jonathan are planning to do some larger community events at times that are more conducive to including preschoolers.



**NEW JEWISH RESOURCE SPECIALIST:** Ana Dillman enjoys Chanukah dinner with her son, Apollo. Ana, a longtime Studio teacher, will be the Jewish resource specialist for the new CSI preschool when it opens this fall.

Carolyn also sees the preschool as part of a continuum of programming for parents and young children. "It will start with rabbinic intern and new father George Altshuler's Expecting Jewishly class," she says. She is planning to have parent and child classes at the preschool, as well as playgroups and Sherith Littles. "We want to create as many entry points as possible to make sure that families are included in our programming even if their kids aren't in the preschool."

Carolyn knows that a major concern for parents of preschoolers is establishing relationships with San Francisco private schools. "I'm reaching out to a long list of schools," she says, "and we'll do a kindergarten panel every year so that graduating preschoolers and their parents can get to know their school options."

Carolyn hopes to enroll 20 to 30 children for the opening semester. "If you have friends who have preschool-age children, please let them know about our program." Parents can book tours on the preschool website. ■



**HOLDING UP THE DOME AND TRADITION:** CSI teens in grades 6–8 are photographing all around Sherith Israel as part of their Jewish Lens Curriculum, which explores Jewish values and community. Upcoming b. mitzvah students Joshua Kamil, Zach Schoenfeld and newest classmate Alex Rose and teacher Kaitlin Wahl (center) pose on the balcony for their friends down below.





## CSI CLIMATE WORK HEATS UP

**Plant a tree, save the planet.** That's the idea behind one of Sherith Israel's climate action team's initiatives. As science professor **Bill Alschuler** explains, trees sequester carbon and help slow climate change. That's why we're looking to plant trees along the strip of sidewalk on Webster Street. Bill is working with infrastructure committee chair **Alan Mirviss** and facilities manager **Corey Christopher** to determine what we need to do to make sure that the trees will thrive.

We're also in discussions with Friends of the Urban Forest (FUF) to sponsor tree planting in San Francisco neighborhoods that are "tree deficient." The idea emerged from a FUF presentation last Yom Kippur that highlighted the need for trees in low-income neighborhoods.

Planting trees is one part of our approach to engaging climate issues. Since the scale of the problem is much larger than any single synagogue can affect, our goal is to find projects that enable volunteers to see a difference. We're also partnering with the Reform Action Center of California (RAC-CA) to advocate for state-wide legislation and with Dayenu, a national coalition of Jewish climate activists.

Co-chair **Carol Kingsley** reports that Dayenu's current focus is on disinvestment from fossil fuel companies. Last year, we participated in a rally at the headquarters of BlackRock, the global asset management firm, to encourage them to live up to their disinvestment commitments. This year, "Dayenu is creating a framework for Jewish organizations like Sherith Israel to consider their own investments." She notes, "We will be doing some thinking about how Sherith Israel can address disinvestment."

We are also one of the most active California congregations working with RAC-CA on legislative advocacy. Last summer, RAC-CA initiated Climate Tzedek, a campaign to engage Reform congregations around climate issues at the state level. On March 19, Sherith Israel will host a regional meeting of Reform congregations to "roll out the legislative campaigns that will be the focus of Climate Tzedek going forward," according to **Bill Shore**, who, along with **Helaine Weinstein**, is Sherith Israel's liaison to RAC-CA.

## IMMIGRATION

One of the social action committee's core programs is our support for immigrants and asylum seekers. In three years of accompaniment work, we've been by the sides of seven families and individuals from around the world. We are currently working with Edward, a new arrival from Colombia, who needs affordable housing in Marin; Kate and Alex from Ukraine, who have begun their visa submission process; and Mashal from Afghanistan, who becomes more independent daily as she mothers a two-year-old and a small baby.



## VOICES from CSI Communities

### NANCY SHEFTEL-GOMES FOR HAMOTZI

"HaMotzi is definitely a community. For some people it's easier to step into the kitchen than into the sanctuary. They want to do mitzvot in action. That act of feeding people is not going to change their circumstances, but providing a delicious warm meal is going to change their day."

*Nancy coordinates 150 volunteers who provide 125-150 meals a week through CSI's HaMotzi and Chicken Soupers programs. To volunteer, contact Nancy Sheftel-Gomes at [hamotzi@sherithisrael.org](mailto:hamotzi@sherithisrael.org).*

## CHESED COMMITTEE

In addition to offering support to congregants in times of need, celebration or transition, the Chesed Committee fosters community in many ways. Twice a year, committee members call senior congregants to see how they're doing. The committee also started a "Challahs from Chesed" drive to send freshly baked challah with Sunday deliveries from HaMotzi to home-bound congregants. The committee is also playing an important role in the Better Together program for teens and seniors. *If you or someone you know could use a hand, please contact Talia Banarie, [tbanarie@sherithisrael.org](mailto:tbanarie@sherithisrael.org), 415-346-1720, x117.*

## JEWISH COALITION FOR LITERACY

Now that the New Year is here, please consider joining the growing list of Jewish Coalition for Literacy volunteers in the vital mitzvah of helping struggling readers become more confident and successful. In just one hour a week, you can help a child bounce back from three years of educational and societal disruptions. It's amazing how much good can come from such a small commitment! *Information: Janet Parker, [jparkersf@gmail.com](mailto:jparkersf@gmail.com), 415.350.0780. Upcoming JCL on-line training and information session: Thursday, Feb. 2, 2023, 3:30-5:30 pm. Register: [jclread.org/sign-up](http://jclread.org/sign-up).*

## CSI GETS OUT THE VOTE

Building on our successful 2020 effort, CSI congregants stepped up again to get out the vote in 2022. According to **Steve Garber**, more than 50 households wrote more than 8,200 postcards to help voters in the Florida primary, the general election and the Georgia Senate runoff. Add to that callers who made thousands of calls to make sure that voters had the information they needed to register and vote. "Helping people overcome voter suppression empowers them to take control of their own political destiny," says Steve. "Huge numbers of congregants stepped up to help minorities vote in these elections. I couldn't be prouder." ■



**THE RABBI'S KID:** Rabbinic intern **George Altshuler** and **Kate Bass** welcomed their daughter **Selah Harris Altshuler-Bass** on December 12. The congregation is cordially invited to her b. mitzvah in December 2035.

## BIRTHS

**Samson Kenneth Dodge**, child of **Lauren Allerhand** and **Sean Dodge**  
12/12/22

**Selah Harris Altshuler-Bass**, child of **George Altshuler** and **Kate Bass**  
12/19/22

**Eleanor Ida Glass**, child of **Noa Levy** and **Ben Glass**  
12/22/22

## BABY NAMINGS

**Isaac Feldman**, child of **Matthew Feldman** and **Michelle Filiba**

**Laura Gould**, child of **Doug** and **Pauline Eveillard**

**Ella Meehan**, child of **Martina Grzmot** and **Kevin Michael Meehan**

## ENGAGEMENTS

**Eric Allen** and **Rachel Flaherman**, child of **Michael** and **Valerie Flaherman**

**Talia Banarie** and **Ethan Kiefer**

## WEDDINGS

**Liza** and **Mark Solovey**

## NEW MEMBERS

**Lauren Birnbaum** and **Benjamin Nagler**

**Howard** and **Dana Bloom**

**Sam Blum**

**Marc Blumberg** and **Elizabeth Jensen-Blumberg**

**Mattias** and **Leah Bottner**

**Elizabeth Cohen**

**Olivia Cornfield**

**Janine** and **Mike Cuthbertson**

**Sam Fischer**

**Maureen Flaherman**

**Rachel Flaherman**

**Nicole** and **Gabriel Ganot**

**Lauren Goff**

**Martina Grzmot** and **Kevin Meehan**

**Farren Hurwitz**

**Brian Khorshad**

**Anna Kleiman**

**Sarah Lusher**

**Evelyn Posamentier**

**Alex Rein**

**Spencer Robert**

**Naomi Rodriquez**

**Joan Solomon**

**Alison** and **Alec Stillman**

**Gabrielle Straton**

**Zara Zetlin**

*May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.*

**Irene Epstein**

**Robert Epstein**, former husband of **Catherine Aubale Epstein**, father of **Stephen** (and **Meg**) and **Diana** (and **Eric**); grandfather of **Jeremy**

**Blanche Kahn**

**Ruth Neirman**, grandmother of **Warren Braunig** (and **Lindsay**)

**Alice Tordjman**

**Sheldon Wolfe**, husband of **Rhoda Wolfe**, father of **Rabbi Greg Wolfe** and **Amy Wolfe**, and grandfather of **Ariella Wolfe Maurer**, **Noah**, **Maya** and **Jasper Wolfe**, and great-grandfather of **Isaac Sheldon**



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**Questions?** Contact **Gordon Gladstone**, executive director, 415.346.1720 x25 or [ggladstone@sherithisrael.org](mailto:ggladstone@sherithisrael.org)

*Interviews ongoing*

## CANTOR SEARCH CONTINUES

Under the leadership of co-chairs **Lisa Erdberg** and **Craig Etlin**, the cantorial search committee is reviewing resumes and vision statements, and beginning to interview candidates. "We are meeting interesting and exciting people," reports CSI president **Judie Wexler**, "but American College of Cantors guidelines forbid us making any names public at this point."

In addition to **Lisa** and **Craig**, the committee includes board members **Andy Denmark** and **Lida Morgenstein**, and congregants **Michael Makstman**, **Sarah Pelzner**, **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes** and **Amy Widdowson**. **Judie** and **Rabbi Jessica Graf** sit with the committee as ex officio members.

"We have several promising applicants and are hopeful of finding a good match," comments **Lisa**. She also thanks board member **Doug Gould**, who "took the extensive info for the ACC application and turned it into a beautiful presentation that gives a good sense of what Sherith Israel is all about." ■



**SHERITH ISRAEL**

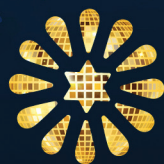
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**SATURDAY, MAY 6**

**6:30–10 pm**

Newman Hall, Sherith Israel

*We Shake Our Groove Thing* while raising funds for Sherith Israel. Enjoy hearty appetizers, an open bar, dancing and a community dessert buffet.

New this year: enticing bargains at our online and live auctions.

Separate activities for kids under 21.

**Sponsorships and tickets  
on sale February 1  
at [sherithisrael.org/gala](http://sherithisrael.org/gala).**