

SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS

WINTER ISSUE • JANUARY–MARCH, 2016



Real estate windfall

SEISMIC RETROFIT AND CEMETERY ENDOWMENT RECEIVE \$9.25 MILLION

A huge windfall from the sale of a commercial property on Geary Boulevard will enable Sherith Israel to begin the second phase of construction on the seismic retrofit in 2016. It will also ensure the viability of the Hills of Eternity cemetery's endowment for generations to come.



Sherith Israel's share—one-third of the sale price of the property at 5200 Geary that houses Ross Dress for Less and Walgreens—amounted to more than \$9.25 million. The Sherith Israel Board of Trustees and the Hills of Eternity cemetery board voted in late December to allocate \$5 million to the Seismic Retrofit Campaign for the second phase of construction. The two boards also voted to retain the remainder of the proceeds as part of the cemetery's endowment.

"The sale of this property is terrific for Sherith Israel," comments board president **Evan Kletter**. "We will be able to jumpstart the second phase of our capital campaign to finish the seismic retrofit work we started in 2010, fulfilling the city's mandate for us to do the work. It allows us to preserve this incredible building that's our congregation's home and to maintain the cemetery in perpetuity."

\$9.25 Million Endowment continues, page 17

Board acceptance will lead to congregational meeting

SENIOR RABBI SEARCH COMMITTEE PRESENTS RECOMMENDATION AT JANUARY BOARD MEETING

The search committee for Sherith Israel's new senior rabbi made its recommendation to the Board of Trustees at the board's January 18 meeting. While the board's decision is not yet public, the next step will be to negotiate terms with the selected candidate and execute a letter of intent. Once both the congregation and the candidate have signed the letter of intent, the candidate's name will be announced, and the congregation will be invited to a special meeting to ratify the choice. Invitations to the special congregational meeting could be sent by the end of January.

"The committee wholeheartedly endorses our proposed candidate," says committee chair **Valerie Jahan**. "We had

extensive time to speak with our three finalists and do due diligence. We were very fortunate that we agreed that any of the candidates would be an outstanding senior rabbi at Sherith Israel."

The search process began late last winter. The committee sought and analyzed extensive congregant input gathered through surveys and small-group discussions. Then it filed a job profile for posting by the Reform movement's Rabbinic Placement Commission. Committee members reviewed two dozen resumes from highly qualified candidates before undertaking a series of Skype and live interviews to whittle down the candidate field.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Welcome the Stranger
TUESDAY, FEB. 2, 7 PM

Purim in Downtown Shushan
FRIDAY, MARCH 25, 6 PM



**CONGREGATION
SHERITH ISRAEL**

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San Francisco, CA 94115
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www.sherithisrael.org

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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A MOMENT WITH RABBI LARRY RAPHAEL



PRAYER AND ASPIRATION

Recently, I finished teaching a course, *Godspeak: Making Space for God in Judaism*. Jews historically have focused on action over faith. But Jews still have maintained a faith in God—even if God is unknowable. God and God's deeds lie at the center of our worship. Many of our prayers and blessings begin, *Baruch Atta Adonai, Eloheinu*—Blessed are You O Eternal, our God. Yet many people who chant or speak these words in our sanctuary have no clear picture of God or don't believe in God at all.

So who are we praying to? And why? Was God behind the Warriors' 24-game winning streak to open this NBA season? Will God grant the Giants victory in the 2016 World Series if we pray hard enough? After all, 2016 will be an even-numbered year, and the Giants won it all in 2010, 2012 and 2014. Did those victories represent answered prayers? God's will?

Petitionary prayer—asking for something—long has had a place in Jewish tradition. During the Amidah we ask for rain or dew in its season, and we ask for peace all the time. Of course, we can ask God for something anytime, anywhere. On the other hand, there's a time to pe-

tition and a time to let it rest. I suggest that prayer encompasses more than our desires, personal or communal.

Prayer reflects our aspirations. When we praise God—whatever we think God might or might not be—we express conviction in our values molded over several millennia by Jewish experience. When we bless God for creating life, we ourselves extol life and value its preservation. When we praise God for making peace in the heavens, we energize and strengthen our own commitment to peace here on earth.

By recognizing our aspirations, we do something quite different from asking something of God. We acknowledge our personal responsibility to live the values we espouse. When we praise God as the peacemaker and ask for peace, we recognize that peace begins with us. We accept that we must partner with God to create a better world. In the same way, personal prayer enables us to find our God-given strengths to cope with the difficulties in our lives. In this almost unfathomable way, God makes us the agents of change. May prayer reveal our deepest aspirations and strengthen us to stand up, be counted and do right. ■

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

"To pray is to dream in league with God, to envision His holy visions."

— Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

A descendant of Chassidic rabbis, Rabbi A.J. Heschel (1907–72), who earned his doctorate from the University of Berlin, bridged two worlds. Deeply spiritual and a pursuer of social justice, he saw prayer not as a means for seeking God's assistance but as a way to become at-

tuned to creation and God's will. He also saw prayer fulfilling a basic human need. "The primary purpose of prayer is not to make requests. The primary purpose is to praise, to sing, to chant. Because the essence of prayer is a song, and man cannot live without a song." ■

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Questions for RABBI JULIE SAXE-TALLER

Several Sherith Israel leaders and congregants attended the Union for Reform Judaism's Biennial convention in Orlando last November. They included Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller; Evan Kletter, CSI board president; board members Valerie Jahan and Stacy Passman; congregants Laura and Steve Olson; and Amy Mallor, executive director. We asked Rabbi Julie to share highlights of her experience.

Q. Who goes to the URJ Biennial and why?

A: Congregants, board and committee members, clergy and staff—everyone is welcome to attend. It's a multi-layered event, so people go for many reasons. Some go to learn about a particular area of Jewish life, for example, how congregations incorporate new technology, or best practices for including people with disabilities into synagogue life. Some go to see old friends and make new ones.

Many people go for the music. Each day offers services and concerts led by musicians writing inspiring new Jewish music, as well as programs with long-beloved songs and prayers. Some people go for the spiritually energizing experience of celebrating Shabbat with 5,000 other Jews. And there's great Jewish shopping! Books, art, jewelry, tallitot, kipot, music and more, much of it made by Jewish artists from around the world.

Q. Do you have some new ideas for Sherith Israel?

A: One of the main reasons I went was to learn from other leaders, particularly those working to bring a greater Jewish contribution to racial justice work. I was also interested in learning how other congregations are responding to the global refugee crisis. Stacy Passman and I attended meetings on these topics and are sharing ideas with Sherith Israel leaders who are launching our work in these areas (see page 16). Many of us at Sherith Israel want to engage with these vital issues both with a local perspective and in collaboration with larger movements.

I also got to share highlights of what we are doing here at Sherith Israel as part of a workshop on the "B'nai Mitzvah Revolution." We are one of a few dozen congregations involved in a movement-wide effort experimenting with innovations to make the bar and bat mitzvah experience more meaningful and powerful for our youth and their families. The interest and excitement I heard from people who came to learn what we are doing made me proud.

Q. What surprised or stood out for you?

A: I didn't anticipate how much the Biennial would engage the topic of Israel. On the first night I was moved by a video tribute marking the 20th *yahrzeit* of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. (*You Tube: "Yitzhak Rabin Tribute-11/4/2015-Biennial 2015."*) Later, Jodi Kantor moderated a panel with Knesset member Stav Shaffir, author Ari Shavit and former URJ President Rabbi Eric Yoffie. (*You-Tube: "Israel Panel: Jodi Kantor, Stav Shaffir, Ari Shavit and Rabbi Eric Yoffie-Biennial 2015."*)

On Saturday night, Vice President Joe Biden addressed the conference. He spoke lovingly about his friendship and partnership with Rabbi David Saperstein, who recently retired as director of our movement's Religious Action Center. Vice President Biden spent much of his talk emphasizing the administration's commitment to Israel. Even while he cautioned against Israel's settlement policy, he clearly understands that Jews need to be assured that the U.S. is looking out for us and for Israel. His talk showed him to be a powerful ally to our people. (*See the URJ's 2015 Biennial website for the video.*)

Q. Why do you suggest that more Sherith Israel members attend the URJ Biennial?

A: Until two years ago, I hadn't attended a URJ Biennial since college. Now I hope to attend many more. The Biennial offers us all a chance to think about how we want to grow Jewishly. It allows us to try something new, whether it's text study or storytelling, political activism with a Jewish twist or strategizing about our congregation's future with people who also care deeply about their congregations. It's especially fun to go as part of a group of people from Sherith Israel. I must sound like a paid advertisement, but I think it's good for us to connect with the Reform movement, to be reminded of our inspiring strength and history, and to participate in the many ways our movement is leading positive change in our own congregations, in the Jewish world and in the world at large. ■

The next URJ Biennial takes place in Boston, December 6–10, 2017.

AVODAH/WORSHIP

HOLIDAY FESTIVALS

TU B'SHVAT SHABBAT SEDER

Friday, Jan. 22

6 pm: Shabbat service in Newman Hall
7:15 pm: Kiddush and a festive meal

*On the sixth day of creation, God said, "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food."
— Genesis 1:29*

Enjoy Shabbat with an integrated Tu b'Shvat seder in Newman Hall celebrating the "birthday of the trees." The informal service includes readings, tastings, music and discussion.

No charge for dinner, but reservations requested. RSVP: Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x 28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.

PURIM PARTY IN DOWNTOWN SHUSHAN

Friday, March 25

4:30–6 pm: ECE Purim carnival in Newman Hall

6 pm: Shabbat and Purim service

7 pm: Purim shpiel for adults and older children (snacks available for little ones)

7:30 pm: Congregational dinner

Come one, come all, costumed befitting the kings and queens of Shushan, to celebrate Mordechai and Esther's victory (yea!) over the evil Haman (boo!). There will be lively Shabbat services, a costume parade for all (including grown-ups!), readings from the Megillah, plus an original Purim shpiel created and directed by Bruce Bierman and performed by CSI stage stars. Lots of fun for everyone at dinner and afterwards, from face painting to vodka tasting.

Dinner: \$20 for adults; \$10 for children under 13. RSVP: Nia Taylor, 415.346.1720, x17, or ntaylor@sherithisrael.org.

Save the date:

PASSOVER SECOND-NIGHT COMMUNITY SEDER

Saturday, April 23, 5 pm

Mark your calendars for our annual family-friendly second-night Seder as we once again tell the Passover story of our journey from bondage to freedom.

Seder reservations: Adults, \$36; post-b'nai mitzvah students, \$18; children, \$10; children under 5, free; \$360 reserves a table for 10. RSVP: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

SPECIAL SHABBATS

SHABBAT YITRO:

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Saturday, Jan. 30

10:30 am: Shabbat service

Noon: Complimentary lunch

12:30–2 pm: Discussion of restorative justice in the San Francisco Superior Court

Learn how the San Francisco Superior Court assists the homeless, foster children and their parents, veterans and people challenged by drug addiction and mental illness. The program, organized by congregant and **Superior Court Judge Jeffrey S. Ross**, details the ways people charged with crimes in specific but difficult circumstances are treated instead of being punished. "The courts have an important role to play in treating the causes of crime, not just the results," explains Judge Ross.

Guest speakers from the San Francisco Superior Court include:

Judge Ronald Albers, Drug Court; Behavioral Health Court

Judge Nancy Davis, Dependency Court

Judge Jeffrey S. Ross, Veterans Justice Court

The program also features speakers from San Francisco's Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, which trains volunteers to work on behalf of defendants and their families in Dependency Court:

Renee Espinoza, CASA executive director

Naomi Irvine, CASA recruitment and training specialist

Adds Judge Ross, "Special advocates play an important role in helping judges make decisions about family reunification."

RSVP: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x 24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

Shabbat Yitro is presented in memory of Bernie Silverman.

DISABILITY AWARENESS SHABBAT WITH

SPECIAL GUEST RUTI REGAN*

Saturday, March 12

9 am: Expanded brunch before Torah study

9:15 am: Torah study

10:30 am: Shabbat service

Please join us for a special Shabbat program sponsored by CSI's Inclusion Task force with **Ruti Regan**, a Torah scribe, rabbinic student, teacher and disability rights advocate. Her core Jewish value is that we are all made *b'tzelem Elohim*, in God's image. As someone with several disabilities, Ruti will share her unique perspective on inclusion.

SHABBAT SERVICES

FRIDAY EVENING

6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat service

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 service

7:15 pm: 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 MORNING

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 service

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.

* This disability awareness Shabbat is made possible by Sherith Israel's recent involvement with INCLUDE, a program of Jewish Learning Works and the Jewish Community Federation that seeks to give all children access to meaningful Jewish experiences.

MAGALIM MINYAN BRINGS YOUNG JEWS TOGETHER

People enjoy spending time with their peers—others with whom they share common interests and life experiences. So Sherith Israel initiated the Magalim Minyan over the summer. The worship group, under the direction of **Rabbi Jessica Graf** and **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller**, met in June, July, August and November for Kabbalat Shabbat services and dinner. “We created a Minyan in the round that was a mix of uplifting, joyous music and informal introductions so people could get to know one another,” comments Rabbi Jessica. “People stayed for a festive, boisterous dinner plus text study. We had to throw people out at 11 pm.”

This winter they are taking a slightly different approach to the Magalim Minyan. “We decided to try inviting the Magalim group to our musical Family Shabbat services, but with a separate Magalim dinner in Bart Hall so they can socialize in the same style as before,” comments Rabbi Jessica. “With the service at 6 pm and dinner starting about 7:15, we assume that some people will join us at 6 for services and others will just come for dinner.”

In addition, the Magalim group has taken part in Tuesday-night Torah study and Havdalah social events. **Daniel Berman** is an enthusiastic participant. The 29-year-old manager at Facebook moved to San Francisco from Detroit. “I found Sherith Israel by word-of-mouth for the High Holy Days in 2014,” he recalls. Dan and his fiancée, **Sara Crumley**, were looking for a community for the long term. “There’s a sense of belonging at Sherith Israel; we’re not just a face in the crowd. It feels like we matter here,” he says. “We’re new and Magalim is new. It’s a great opportunity to stand up and be part of something.”

Graphic designer **Alexis Kershner** grew up at Sherith Israel, where she became a bat mitzvah and was confirmed. She was excited when Magalim started up because it attracts people in their 30s and 40s, “more my age group,” says Alexis. She attended a Magalim study group at Twitter and hosted another event at her home. “Magalim is so important. It’s the next generation, and we need to build it.” ■



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

FRIDAY, FEB. 12

6 pm: Shabbat service
7:15 pm: Magalim Shabbat dinner for younger adults (20s–40s)

Dinner: Members, free; nonmembers, \$18

RSVP: Rabbi Jessica Graf, rabbigraf@sherithisrael.org

*For Magalim program information:
Rabbi Jessica Graf
rabbigraf@sherithisrael.org*

SPECIAL SHABBATS, continued

SHABBAT CHAI + SHABBAT METZORA Saturday, April 16

Join us in the morning for a communitywide Shabbat Chai with activities for the whole family followed by an important discussion about medical care.

9:30 am: Grade-level learning about Pesach for Religious School students plus art studio, yoga and Torah study for adults

10:30 am: Tot Shabbat with singing, puppets and art projects

10:30 am: Joyous Shabbat worship with Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller and music leader Lior Ben-Hur, plus Torah readings by parents and teachers

12:15 pm: Kiddush and potluck lunch

Shabbat Metzora: The Art and Science of Relationship-Centered Medical Care

12:15 pm: Lunch

12:45 pm: Program

Enjoy a complimentary lunch with advance sign-up. Then hear a discussion on diversity, inclusion, bias and inequity in health care and discover how race, language preference, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness and mental health can affect medical outcomes. Learn about the value of high-quality, culturally humble communication in medicine and practice communication skills that can improve outcomes for patients, families and health-care professionals—a win-win for all.

Speakers include:

Bill Shore, MD, a family physician and professor emeritus at the UCSF School of Medicine

Denise L. Davis, MD, FAACH, clinical professor at the UCSF School of Medicine

In addition to our speakers, the program was organized by **Helen Luey**, vice president of CSI and chair of the synagogue’s inclusion task force, **Valerie Jahan, MD**, a pediatrician and immediate past president of the congregation, and **Phaedra Bell, PhD**, executive director of the Admissions and Student Experience Team (AsSET) at the UCSF School of Medicine.

Shabbat Metzora lunch is complimentary with RSVP: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x 24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

ADULT PROGRAMS

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

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.

PRIME TIME CLUB

For congregants 65 and up

Fridays, Noon–2 pm (lunch included)

In memory of Max and Marilyn Singer

Feb. 12: Rabbi Martin Weiner discusses the Zionist position on West Bank settlements

Mar. 11: Cantor Martin Feldman accompanied by Jonathan Dimmock present an afternoon of song and learning

Apr. 8: Professor Adrian Praetzelis, Sonoma State University, talks about archaeological digs in San Francisco that relate to the old Jewish cemetery on Dolores Street

Todah rabbah—many thanks—to the Max and Marilyn Singer Foundation for its continuing support of the Prime Time lunch series.

DOWNTOWN TALMUD CLASS

Rabbi Larry Raphael

Thursdays, Noon–1 pm

Jan. 14, 28; Feb. 11, 25

No sessions in March

Farella Braun + Martel

Russ Bldg., 235 Montgomery, 17th Fl.

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.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CONVERSION

Maurice Kamins

Mondays, 6:30–8 pm

Feb. 15, Mar. 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.

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

JEWISH BOOK CLUB

Mondays, 7 pm

Jan. 25: *The Physician* by Noah

Gordon. Discussion leader: Valerie Jahan. In the eleventh century, a young English man claims to be a Jew to gain admission to a renowned medical school in Persia.

Feb. 22: *The Paris Architect* by Charles

Belfoure. Discussion leader: Sally Flanzer. During the Nazi occupation of Paris, an architect is asked to design a hiding place for a wealthy Jew.

March 28: *The Glass Room* by Simon

Mawer. Discussion leader: Nancy Sheftel-Gomes. In 1930s Czechoslovakia, the dream home of a wealthy assimilated Jewish man and his non-Jewish wife undergoes dramatic changes.

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

EXPLORING JEWISH BELIEFS AND PRACTICES: AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Rabbi Larry Raphael,

Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller,

Rabbi Jessica Graf and Lisa Erdberg

Sundays, 10 am–Noon

Jan. 24–May 15

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. Topics include:

- Jewish beliefs and values
- Holidays and the Jewish calendar
- Prayer and liturgy
- Lifecycle events

Materials fee: \$5. The course book, Living Judaism by Rabbi Wayne Dosick, will be available for purchase at the first class for \$10. Information and registration: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

MAGALIM Circles of Jewish Life

Younger adults 20s–40s join Rabbi Jessica Graf, director of Magalim, for exciting activities at Sherith Israel and around San Francisco.

TORAH STUDY

Most Tuesdays

6:30–7 pm: Schmoozing and light noshes

7–8 pm: Study

Rabbi Graf's study

Enjoy an informal discussion on the weekly Torah portion. No experience or preparation necessary.

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.

HAMOTZI & CHICKEN SOUPERS

**HaMotzi: Sundays,
9:30 am–12:30 pm**

**Chicken Soupers: One Sunday
a month, Noon–4 pm**

Jan. 17, Feb. 14, March 6

HaMotzi volunteers prepare 100 meals for two shelters in San Francisco each week. Chicken Souper volunteers prepare meals for clients of Jewish Family and Children's Services clients each month. Volunteers are needed to shop, pick up donations, cook and deliver. *Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, 415.346.1720, x28, or nsgomes@sherithisrael.org.*

KOLEYNU CONGREGATIONAL CHOIR

Sings at holidays and Shabbat services.
Jonathan Dimmock, 415.346.1720, x29, or jdimmock@sherithisrael.org.

OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Greet visitors at our front desk, answer phones or help with office tasks.
Amy Mallor, 415.346.1720, x30, or amallor@sherithisrael.org.

AN ENTREPRENEURIAL EVENING WITH KARA GOLDIN, FOUNDER OF HINT WATER

Tuesday, Jan. 26, 6:30–8:30 pm
Private home TBD

Join us for a great discussion, including noshes and plenty of HINT Water.
RSVP: Rabbi Graf (see below).

**SHABBAT DINNER
FOLLOWING SERVICES**
Friday, Feb. 12

**PURIM CELEBRATION FOLLOWING
SERVICES/PURIM SHPIEL**
Friday, Mar. 25

**PRESENTATION OF THE SZYK HAG-
GADAH WITH DINNER FOLLOWING
AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT**
Sunday, Apr. 12, 4:30–6 pm

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

ADULT B'NAI MITZVAH STUDENTS EAGER TO LEARN

Susan Borkin didn't have a bat mitzvah as a youngster. It wasn't common when she grew up. Susan had studied for an adult confirmation at Sherith Israel and she took a special drash-writing class, presenting her carefully researched sermon to the congregation. But she felt her Jewish learning wasn't complete without studying Hebrew and being called to the bimah to read Torah.

After the High Holy Days when Susan heard that **Rabbi Larry Raphael** was offering an adult b'nai mitzvah class in his last year as senior rabbi, she didn't want to pass up the opportunity to study with him and rabbis **Julie Saxe-Taller** and **Jessica Graf**. "I've wanted to learn Hebrew for years, and this seemed like the perfect time to do it."

Xander Karsten was raised in a basically secular home, half-Jewish and half-Episcopalian. In college at SUNY Binghamton in New York, he became more interested in Judaism and the Jewish community on campus. Fast-forward several years. Following a move to San Francisco, Xander found Torah study and other adult classes at Sherith Israel. But he also wanted more. "I had been

looking for a b'nai mitzvah class for a couple of years. I wanted the experience of being called to the bimah." For Xander, like Susan, there was no time like the present.

Together with a half-dozen other students—**Shoshana Asher**, **Peter Klivans**, **Pat Miller**, **Jesse Ratner**, **Xander Shapiro** and **Merti Walker**—Susan and Xander are learning about Torah, Reform Judaism, the Jewish calendar, parts of the worship service, cantillation (chanting), mitzvah and tikkun olam. Depending on their prior background, many of the students are also taking beginning Hebrew with **Hilda Isaacson**. "We see Hilda for Hebrew class at 9:30 am on Sunday, and then move to the rabbi's office at 11 for the b'nai mitzvah class," explains Susan. "It's a full schedule. You can't go out of town or you'll miss something." The b'nai mitzvah service takes place on Saturday, April 30. Everyone is invited.

"B'nai mitzvah, whether for adults or for 13-year-olds, are really about community," notes Rabbi Raphael. "Every synagogue should have several opportunities for adult learning, including an adult b'nai mitzvah class. It provides an



THE JOY OF LEARNING: Adult b'nai mitzvah students **Xander Karsten** and **Merti Walker** share a moment during a class discussion of the Jewish calendar. The entire class will be called to the bimah to chant Torah on Saturday, April 30.

opportunity for serious study and a concrete set of accomplishments that need to be completed.

"I'm looking forward to April," says Xander. "I'm nervous and I hope my Hebrew is good enough. But I've gotten lots of positive support from my friends here at Sherith Israel and in the rest of my life. My mother may even come out to see me chant Torah." We can all imagine her kvelling with pride. ■

NAMI Family-to-Family program at CSI

FREE PROGRAM HELPS FAMILIES COPE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization, holds its acclaimed Family-to-Family education program at Sherith Israel on **Thursdays, 5:30–8:30 pm, January 28 through April 14**. The 12-week program was created for family, significant others and friends of people living with mental illness. Research has shown that this evidenced-based program significantly improves the coping and problem-solving abilities of people close to individuals living with mental health conditions. Taught by NAMI-trained family members who have been there, the program includes presentations, discussions and interactive exercises.

Jan. 28 Introduction to family education

Feb. 4 Understanding schizophrenia and mood episodes; getting through periods of crisis

Feb. 11 Types and subtypes of mood disorders, borderline personality disorder, panic disorder, OCD, PTSD, and co-occurring brain and addictive disorders; telling our stories

Feb. 18 Basics of brain biology and causes of brain disorders; individual stages of adaptation to the trauma of mental illness

Feb. 25 Problem-solving workshop

Mar. 3 Medication review

Mar. 10 Empathy: inside mental illness

Mar. 17 Communication skills workshop

Mar. 24 Self-care

Mar. 31 Rehabilitation: making choices for recovery

Apr. 7 Fighting stigma and opportunities for advocacy

Apr. 14 Evaluation, certification and celebration

The CSI Inclusion Task Force, chaired by **Helen Luey**, has been instrumental in bringing this important mental health program to Sherith Israel. Comments Helen, "We hope that our collaboration with NAMI will make it easier for Sherith Israel members to seek and receive support from our clergy and our community when they are faced with mental health issues." ■

Information and registration:
Bailey Wendzel, NAMI San Francisco
415.474.7310, x667, or bailey@namisf.org

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 puppets, bubbles and parachute games—with early childhood director Jeni Markowitz Clancy. Fridays include a special Shabbat visit with Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller.

Drop-in playgroup fees: \$12 per visit. Ten-visit card: \$65 for CSI members; \$80 for non-members. Golden Gate Moms Group special rates apply only on the second Monday of the month. Just drop in; no sign-up necessary. Information: Eric Drucker 415.346.1720, x27, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

MAMAS GROUP

Fridays, 9:15–10:30 am
Contact Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller

Join Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller and new moms for meaningful discussions about parenting, motherhood and bringing Jewish values and traditions into the family.

Rates for ten-week series: \$100 for members; \$140 for nonmembers. Information: Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, 415.346.1720, x25, or rabbijst@sherithisrael.org.

FAMILY SHABBAT

2nd Friday of the month
Feb. 12, March 11, April 8

6 pm: Services in Sanctuary
7:15 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. Our clergy share stories meaningful for congregants of all ages.

HAVDALAH PAJAMA PARTY

Saturday, Feb. 20, 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

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 (K-PK) 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.

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

TOT SHABBAT AT SHABBAT CHAI

Saturday, April 16
10:30 am

Join us for a fun-filled pre-Pesach Shabbat for families with young children or grandchildren. Tot Shabbat features songs, storytelling, prayers and a family-friendly environment, including puppets with Jeni Clancy and art projects with Anastasia Dillman. A light Kiddush follows. Join the full Shabbat Chai congregational potluck after services.

Information: Eric Drucker 415.346.1720, x27, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

SAVE THE DATE

PASSOVER SECOND-NIGHT
COMMUNITY SEDER

Saturday, April 23, 5 pm

Mark your calendars for our annual family-friendly second-night Seder as we once again tell the Passover story of our journey from bondage to freedom.

Seder reservations: Adults, \$36; post-b'nai mitzvah students, \$18; children, \$10; children under 5, free; table of 10, \$360. RSVP: 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.*

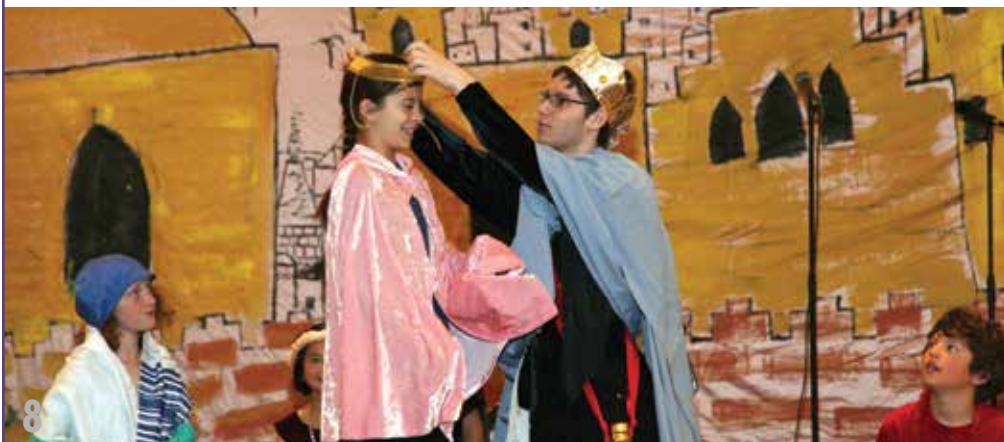
PURIM IN DOWNTOWN SHUSHAN

Friday, March 25

4:30–6 pm: ECE Purim carnival in Newman Hall

6 pm: Shabbat and Purim service

Bring your little ones in costumes so they can cheer on Mordechai and Esther, and boo Haman while noshing on Hamentashen and playing Purim games. A congregational dinner follows. (Details on page 4.)



Parents and children learn together—and separately

FAMILY EDUCATION ENHANCES JEWISH VALUES

Children learn a great deal when they do so with their parents. And parents learn with their children. Towards that end, Sherith Israel's Religious School is offering a number of special parent-child programs during Religious School on Sunday mornings and one on Shabbat Chai this winter and spring. Families taking part can spend quality educational time together, increase their knowledge of Jewish values and have fun while learning.

Ruth Auerbach Levin, who has resumed the position of family education specialist, helped create the programs. They serve important purposes, according to education director **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes**. "Students learn more alongside their parents. Also, parents get to meet each other and make connections." The programs all are experiential, focusing on learning while doing. In addition, parents will have their own time with our clergy to engage in adult study.

Here's a sample of the family education program:

Sundays, January 10, February 21, April 3 and May 22
4- and 5-year-olds:

Yad b'Yad—Helping Hands

Jeni Clancy, early childhood director, leads this series. Children and parents work at the San Francisco Food Bank, plant a garden, cook for a shelter, or make blankets and cards for hospitalized children. The program also includes storytelling, songs, art, celebrations and traditions to take home.

Sunday, January 10
5th and 6th grades:
What's my mitzvah?

Students and parents learn more about mitzvot so students can identify their mitzvah project for their b'nai mitzvah year. The film *Havana Curveball*, a documentary about a Jewish boy who sent needed baseball equipment to Cuba, will be shown as inspiration for choosing a creative mitzvah project.

Saturday, January 16,
during Shabbat Chai
7th and 8th grades:
Who is a Jew?

Attendees connect to the diversity of the Jewish community and pluralism in the United States with **Ilana Kaufman**, a program officer of the Jewish Community Federation. Through interactive experiences, students and adults explore the Jewish community ecosystem, expand their cultural literacy and learn how to welcome more people into a larger Jewish tent.

Sunday, March 13
4th grade:

Jewish history through food

Using favorite family recipes as the basis for discussion, parents and children can connect their own family's journey to the larger story of the Jewish people, which the students are studying in class. At a potluck lunch, each family will share a dish reflecting their personal story. Activities include a Torah-based food scavenger hunt, making aprons, baking a Torah Cake and assembling a cookbook with family recipes.

Sunday, April 3,
Mitzvah Day for the entire school:
Volunteering at the San Francisco Food Bank

Every year Sherith Israel families with children 4 years old and older roll up their sleeves and get to work sorting and packaging food for hungry San Franciscans at the San Francisco Food Bank. There are two shifts, 9–11 am and 12:30–2:30 pm. RSVP: Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720 x27, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

Family Education continues, page 15



CHILDREN MAKE TIKKUN OLAM HAPPEN: Preparing food for people staying in a shelter makes learning about healing the world a hands-on experience.

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL PROGRAMS

SUNDAYS

Preschool to Grade 8
9:30 am–12:15 pm

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

Hebrew School
Grades 3 to 6
12:30–2 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
nsgomes@sherithisrael.org

HOSPITALITY WITH A SMILE

For a dozen years Sherith Israel's HaMotzi volunteers have volunteered three days of shopping, cooking and serving meals for the San Francisco Interfaith Council's winter men's shelter at St. Mary's Cathedral. Over the Christmas holidays CSI congregants and friends helped feed the 100 men who stay there from November through March.

Thanks to all who donated their time and energy to make sure the shelter's clients had healthy, delicious meals, complete with donated home-baked cookies.



Zach, Caroline and Ben Abrams
Allen Ackerman
Greg Alterman
Jean Atelsek
Ruth Auerbach
Jennifer and Gillian Berkowitz
Norm Brand
Al and Ardis Breslauer
John Dellar
Anastasia Dillman
Mike and Taylor Edelhart

Lisa Erdberg
The Etlin family
Susan Evans
Laura Freedman
Stephanie Galinson
Mimi Gauss
Brad Graham and family
Van and Jeri Hart
Xander Karsten
Miriam Kasden and Roxie Zigman
Bill Kedem and Laurel Rest

Michelle Kletter
Zeke Kossover
Nancy Lenvin
Chris, Dan, Noah and Gabe Linder
Denise Migdail
Anne Peskoe
Ann Popkin
The Recht-Appel family
Tanya Schevitz and Catcher and Cash Ashkinos
Jean Schore

Ken Scofield
Nancy Sheftel-Gomes
Bill and Shira Shore
Nancy Spiro
Michael, Milo and Wende Stern
Danny Walker
Merti Walker
Karen Zelmar
Marcy Zelmar
Susan Zelmar

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL FREEDOM CONCERT



TZEDAKAH IN ACTION: Inspired by our Religious School teachers, who wanted to teach students about the world refugee crisis, CSI students staged a moving concert of songs and stories on December 13. The third grade (above) sang a Ugandan Abayudaya version of *Hinei Ma Tov*. The students raised \$460 to donate to Medical Team International.

ECE HOEDOWN



CHANUKAH AND BLUEGRASS FOR A RIP-ROARING GOOD TIME: ECE director **Jeni Clancy** lit the chanukiah as the little ones and their parents looked on. **Anastasia** and **Japheth Dillman** admired the bake-sale table, and **Alicia Kletter** with daughter **Talia** and friend **Zoe Zilberman** were among the many parents and kids who had a great time.

CHANUKAH 2015



LET THERE BE LIGHT: Our shortest days were bright with celebration. **Lior Ben-Hur** and his band joined **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller** for a reggae-inspired Shabbat. **Rabbi Larry Raphael** helps guests light the chanukiah.

CSI CONGREGATION SHERITH ISRAEL

people

Living tikkun olam and gemilut hasadim

PROFILE: BILL AND SHIRA SHORE

Thirty-five years ago, Bill Shore sought a religious school for his daughter Rebecca, who had recently started kindergarten. Sherith Israel came highly recommended. Sure enough, Rebecca was excited and inspired by the religious school program and had a great time. Her enthusiasm rubbed off on Bill. The young father became increasingly involved in the synagogue—particularly its efforts to promote social justice.

Today, Bill, a past president of the congregation, continues to be instrumental in Sherith Israel's growth and its focus on social issues. His wife, Shira, is also involved in social issues. Rebecca? She's now 41 and a board member of her synagogue in New York City.

Shira and Bill consistently model the spirit of giving back. "I come from a tradition of involvement," says Bill, whose parents served the temple where the family worshipped in Toledo, Ohio. "The commitment to service and tikkun olam [repairing the world through social action] is the basis of the way I see Judaism."

Shira, a licensed marriage and family therapist, participates with Sherith Israel's Caring Community outreach program. This dedicated group of volunteers assists people with varying needs—"people," she explains, "who have had a baby, a death in the family or other difficulties." Shira often brings a meal to someone who needs company and sits with them, listening not as a counselor but as a compassionate friend. She is a mentor for people who are considering converting to Judaism at Sherith Israel, helping them prepare for and explore that journey for themselves. She is also a cooking captain for HaMotzi.

In addition Shira volunteers in Kol Hane-shama, a service of the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center and the Zen Hospice Project at the Jewish Home of San Francisco. She serves as a spiritual care partner for four residents at the home, including nearly 108-years-young CSI congregant **Doris Sperber**, mother of **David Sperber**.

A family physician and professor emeritus at the UCSF School of Medicine, Bill is working with UCSF faculty members

Denise Davis, MD, and Phaedra Bell, PhD, to create topical and timely events like the third annual Medical Shabbat on April 16. The program, which focuses on medical practices and ethics, will address diversity in medicine and medical schools. It also will look at how racism limits access to quality medical care for diverse populations. Bill is committed to raising consciousness about "the lack of diversity and inclusion, and racism in medical care, and how that affects us all."

Bill is also working on a Tuesday, February 2, program about the Syrian refugee crisis. He is spearheading the project with fellow CSI congregant **Richard Rozen** in collaboration with **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller**. It's Bill's hope that by meeting and hearing from two Syrian refugees who have settled in the Bay Area, we will gain a greater understanding of what millions of people fleeing an unstable homeland have endured. "We're all refugees," Bill says about American Jews, most of whom came to the United States from another country or descended from people who did.

He adds that just as Jews arriving in the U.S. were "strangers in a strange land" who found a mostly welcoming country to call home, it's important to extend a hand to today's refugees.

Shira and Bill were married at Sherith Israel in 1994 by then **Senior Rabbi Martin Weiner**.

Between them, they have three children and seven grandchildren, ranging from ten- to three-years-old, to whom they're dedicated. Sherith Israel also has guided Shira's own journey. With a background as a music therapist, Shira continues to express her love of spiritual music as a member of Koleynu, Sherith Israel's volunteer choir. After attending an international music festival in Israel in 1996, she changed her name from Susan to Shira, the Hebrew word for "song." Eleven years ago she chanted Torah for the first time as an adult bat mitzvah. Recalls Shira: "That was a wonderful experience."

What keeps them involved? Bill and Shira both have successful careers and outside interests. Yet Sherith Israel remains a top priority—a point of deep connection for them as a couple and as individuals. It's a feeling, Bill says, that comes from a congregation where people are authentic. "Although the building is magnificent," Bill notes about Sherith Israel's historic domed sanctuary, "it's the feeling of community that keeps us involved." Adds Shira: Sherith Israel "is my spiritual home." ■



LIVING THEIR VALUES: Shira and Bill Shore reach out to Sherith Israel and the broader community with grace and compassion.

On November 24, just before Thanksgiving, Sherith Israel members turned out for the San Francisco Interfaith Council's annual prayer breakfast. The early risers included **Al and Ardis Breslauer, John and Jobyna Dellar, Mikiko Huang, Valerie Jahan, Adrienne Kristine, Amy Mallor, Rabbi Larry Raphael, Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, Steve Weiner and Norm Dito, Howard Wexler and Jean Wright...**

And on Thanksgiving Day, **John Dellar, Nancy Sheftel-Gomes, and Bill and Shira Shore** represented Sherith Israel at the Interfaith Council's annual Thanksgiving Prayer service held at the San Francisco Baha'i Center. Sherith Israel hosted this special event last year...

Rabbi Larry Raphael joined the clergy and other special guests at Calvary Presbyterian for an interfaith service of peace and unity after the attacks on Paris, Baghdad and Beirut. Other guests included **Michael Pappas** and **Rita Semel** of the Interfaith Council and Assembly member **David Chiu...**

Nancy Sheftel-Gomes led an experiential art project, *Prayer Flags of Healing* (currently on display outside the Religious School office), for a Jewish professional development day focusing on child sexual abuse. The event, *Beyond Silence*, was sponsored by Shalom Bayit, the Bay Area Healing Center, Jewish Learning Works and the Northern California Board of Rabbis. **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller and Shira Shore** also attended...

Kudos to **Monica and Alan Zimmerman**, recipients of the American Jewish Committee's Civic Leadership Award. Their daughters, **Rabbi Jessica Graf** and **Sabrina Bluestein**, and their husbands, **Jonathan Graf** and **Stephen Bluestein**, were there to cheer them on, as were AJC and Sherith Israel board member **Lynn Sedway** with **Paul, CSI**

board member **Gale Gottlieb**, plus **Rabbi Larry Raphael, Rabbi Marty Weiner, Lynn and Ken Baron, Jim and Claire Davis, Craig Etlin, Susan and Leland Faust, Mimi Gauss, Susen Grossman, Alexis Kershner, Benjamin and Beth Pollock, Lynne and Allan Schuman, and Steve Weiner and Norm Dito.**

A group of New Israel Fund supporters turned out for the Guardian of Democracy Dinner in October, including: **Fred Altshuler and Julia Cheever, Jim Davis, Mikiko Huang, Valerie and Thierry Jahan, Susan Kolb, Frank Mainzer and Lonnie Zwerin, Lee and Stuart Pollak, Rabbi Larry Raphael, and Lynn and Paul Sedway.**

Congrats to **Sasha Lekach**, daughter of **Julie House** and **Stan Lekach**. This fall Sasha, a UC Davis grad, who has worked on local San Francisco papers and at the Chicago Tribune, received a fellowship from UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. The award funds two J-School students each year to support and mentor students at UC's Daily Cal, where the **News Nosh** got her start. Go Bears...

CSJ-ers in the news: Financial advisor **Leland Faust** is a regular in the Huff Post. His latest columns look at violence in the NFL and why our financial system collapsed (and why not much has changed)... The J Weekly highlighted **Nancy Brunn**, a "concierge" for single moms for Big Tent Judaism, in a November 13 feature about single mothers... The News Nosh caught up with **Cash Ashkinos**, son of **Tanya Schevitz** and **Terry Ashkinos**, and his entrepreneurial spirit a bit late. He crowdfunded to raise tuition for his trip to Camp Inc, a Jewish summer camp in Colorado. His successful project was written up in the J Weekly and on Time.com and shown on NBC News. I wonder what his plans are for next summer...

Mazel tov to **Jessica Carew Kraft** and her husband, **Jordan Elias**. Jordan recently started a new position as senior counsel at Girard Gibbs, a plaintiffs law firm in San Francisco. Jessica was recently appointed vice president of content at the Bulleit Group, a tech communications firm...

It's a new year, and financial advisor **Ira Fateman** reminds us all to start off 2016 with a resolution to pay more attention to our personal finances. He is coordinating a workshop at San Francisco State College of Extended Learning on February 27. Find out more at betterdecisions.money or cel.sfsu.edu/Westfield...

This January, **Richard Rozen**, president of the Hills of Eternity cemetery board, had several paintings in a group show at the Alley Cat Bookstore and Gallery on 24th Street. A retired dentist who has been painting abstracts—many to specific pieces of classical music—for 40 years, Richard sold a piece during the show. His next show will be at the Belvedere Tiburon Library in July...

Looking toward spring, Sherith Israel board member **Daniel Dohan** will be part of the leadership group attending the Jewish Community Federation's trip to Israel this March... ■

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



NU? THE (UN)USUAL

The secular New Year again makes us aware of the passing of time and with that our hopes for change and renewal. It reminds me that change is a constant, although many changes actually represent small increments of what is new and different. These changes often are built on the past and the hard work people have done to improve things or simply keep up with the challenges that inevitably confront us. I have several examples to offer.

This past November I attended the Union for Reform Judaism's Biennial in Orlando, along with our board president **Evan Kletter**, **Valerie Jahan**, **Stacy Passman** and **Steve** and **Laura Olson**. It was nice to be back in Florida where I grew up, and wonderful to worship, learn and schmooze with 5,000 others so highly involved in the Reform movement.

I am proud that the URJ, the largest Jewish group in North America, adopted a broad transgender rights policy. The URJ not only stated its own commitment to equality but also urged synagogues and other Jewish groups to

be advocates for transgender rights. This means more change in terms of taking concrete steps like training staffs on accommodating transgender people.

Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the URJ, told an enthusiastic crowd, "We have a longstanding commitment to bringing in people who have heretofore been on the margins of society. For us, this is not just political correctness, but opening possibilities theologically." While Rabbi Jacobs' words represent a "new" stand, it wasn't, as my quotation marks indicate, all that new. And it wasn't particularly controversial. Reform Judaism has a long history of recognizing the rights of gay and transgender people. The resolution was readily approved on a voice vote.

Change is coming to Sherith Israel as well. Still, it will be far more an evolution than a revolution. We're on the verge of selecting a new senior rabbi to succeed **Rabbi Larry Raphael**. We're fortunate to be assessing three finalists, each of whom would be an asset to our congregation and community. Our

new senior rabbi will help us implement changes, but they'll be based on work we've already done and take us to the next level as a warm, inclusive and exciting place to worship, study and help make the world better.

Later this spring you'll be seeing our re-designed logo. It will look a lot like our previous logo because it builds on who and what we are. Our fabulous building with its impressive dome will still be featured. But everything will be simplified a bit to reflect today's design tastes. We'll have a new color palette and a new type treatment, too. What you see won't be radically different at all, but an updating.

So on we go to 2016. The New Year offers us new challenges to be sure—although a \$5 million addition to our Seismic Retrofit Campaign from a recent property sale will help greatly (see more on page 1).

I wish you and yours a Happy New Year—it seems like only a few months since I last wrote that. And if anyone asks, "Nu?" Point to Sherith Israel as a fine example that there's lots of good news to talk about. ■

SENIOR RABBI SEARCH, from page 1

At early November's Union for Reform Judaism Biennial in Orlando, committee chair **Valerie Jahan**, committee member and president of the board **Evan Kletter**, and committee and board member **Stacy Passman** met briefly with three finalists.

Following guidelines of the Rabbinic Placement Commission, the finalists met with congregational leaders at Sherith Israel, as well as in homes and venues around San Francisco. They chatted and dined with, and presented divrei torah to, the committee, as well as the board; past presidents; committee chairs; and the board of our Hills of Eternity cemetery. They also spoke with **Rabbi Emeritus Martin Weiner**, our clergy and our senior staff, including executive director **Amy Mallor** and education director **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes**.

It was critical, **Evan** points out, that in addition to being chosen, our new senior rabbi also has to choose **Sherith Israel**. "You want a really good fit so such an important relationship can last a long time."

“**The entire committee is excited about our selection.**”

Valerie adds, "The entire committee is excited about our selection. It followed a long process during which committee members always put the interests of **Sherith Israel** first. Finding people who work so collegially with such respect for each other is very rare."

The position of senior rabbi will officially be filled on July 1, the start of the standard clergy year. This is well in advance of the High Holy Days. Prior to that, a transition committee will be formed to welcome and integrate our new senior rabbi into our community. ■

PASSAGES

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

NEW MEMBERS

Charles and Lisa Buchwalter
Beth Cousens and Joel Aufrecht and
their son Milo
Alyson Ebzery and Nir Biderman
Szofia Gutvill and her son Noah
Alexander Karsten
Anne Popkin

UPCOMING B'NAI MITZVAH

Nina Morgenstein, daughter of David and
Lida Morgenstein, January 23, 2016
Josh Seligman, son of Scott Seligman,
February 20, 2016
Sam Saxe-Taller, son of Rabbi Julie Saxe-
Taller and Michael Taller, April 2, 2016
Shin Lee, son of Aaron Lee, April 9, 2016

CHOOSING JUDAISM

Thierry Jahan, husband of Valerie Jahan
Lisa Palma Moss, wife of Michael Moss

May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing.

Louise Blatteis Brownell, sister of David Blatteis
Chuck Edelstein, brother of Jean Schore
Ruth Joseph, grandmother of Michael Joseph

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Jewish Community Since 1850*



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FAMILY EDUCATION, from page 9

Sunday, April 10

1st grade:

Tzedakah soup

Students learn about farm-to-table agriculture, food insecurity and tzedakah. They also brainstorm ways to help those in need. Students will make soup for Chicken Soupers, cookies for an after-school bake sale and PB&J sandwiches for the Compass Family Shelter. Parents will learn ways to teach empathy through Jewish values.

Sunday, May 1

2nd and 3rd grades:

Jewish time

Students and parents discuss the Jewish lunar calendar, including the holidays and their seasons, nature and agriculture, and how our calendar differs from the civil calendar. Students will make calendars to learn about the phases of the moon and holiday symbols. Parents will explore the uniqueness and challenges of living Jewishly in a secular world. ■

SPECIAL THANKS

FAMILY SHABBAT DINNERS

A hearty thank-you to **Dan Schwartz** and **Yanan Ding** and to **David** and **Lida Morgenstein** for their generous contributions that fund our monthly Family Shabbat dinners. Their thoughtfulness allows us to offer a warm and welcoming dinner for congregants and guests each month.

FRESH, ORGANIC PRODUCE FOR HAMOTZI FROM GREEN GULCH FARM

Thanks to the efforts of congregant **Hope Greenhill**, this summer HaMotzi received farm-fresh produce from the Green Gulch stand at the Ferry Building farmer's market. Hope not only arranged for the donation, but she picked up the food and delivered it to CSI. "Green Gulch sent us 20-40 pounds of produce each week for about 15 weeks," says **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes**, who coordinates our HaMotzi and Chicken Souper programs. "Our clients are grateful for this wonderful donation."

NEW CARPETING AND A FACELIFT FOR THE GOLDSTEIN CHAPEL

With the help of a generous donation from the **Seligman Foundation**, CSI was able to give the Goldstein Chapel on the first floor a much-needed facelift. New carpets, fresh paint and new chairs have enhanced the historic beauty of this central space. Architect **Ellen Schumm** guided the project, miraculously rejuvenating the space. Have a look next time you are in the building.



TIKKUN OLAM CORNER

Carry your part of the Torah



JEWISH COALITION FOR LITERACY: Janet Parker (center) welcomes **Carla Shaw** (left) and **Emmy Etlin** as new JCL volunteers. Other JCL volunteers who responded to the High Holy Day action postcard were **Sy Aal, Marilyn Allen, Myriam Arnold, Sherry Ruskin** and **Deborah Sokolsky**. "The December JCL training was a huge success," notes Janet, CSI's JCL coordinator. "By opening their hearts to children who need our help, our volunteers make a huge difference."

For information about the next JCL orientation and training, contact Janet Parker, 415.282.1495, or jparkersf@hotmail.com.

MITZVAH DAY AT THE SAN FRANCISCO FOOD BANK

Sunday, April 3

9–11 am or 12:30–2:30 pm

Every year Sherith Israel families with children 4 years and older roll up their sleeves and get to work at the San Francisco Food Bank sorting and packing food for hungry San Franciscans. Space is limited, so RSVP soon for your preferred time: 9–11 am or 12:30–2:30 pm. "It's a great way to get to know people better and to make a real difference in people's lives," comments **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes**.

RSVP: Eric Drucker, 415-346-1720, x27, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

CARING COMMUNITY SEEKS ANGELS

Sherith Israel's Caring Community officially welcomes new-borns with a visit and roast-chicken Shabbat dinner. **Rhoda Wolfe**, who coordinates the effort, says they have welcomed 26 babies since the program began three years ago. The group also coordinates with the clergy to offer a helping hand to people in need of other kinds of assistance, whether it's hospital visits, rides or home-delivered meals. As Rhoda puts it, "We welcome others—new angels—to join us reaching out to fellow congregants."

For more information—whether you need assistance or would like to volunteer—contact Eric Drucker, 415.346.1720, x24, or edrucker@sherithisrael.org.

WELCOME THE STRANGER

Tuesday, Feb. 2

7 pm

Special program about the world's refugee crisis

As we watched boatloads of people escaping from Syria through Greece, crowds facing barbed-wire borders near Hungary or others seeking safe havens trapped at train stations farther north in Europe, we realized that we could be those people. As Jews we know that our parents, grandparents or great-grandparents were once the world's refugees, the "others" not welcomed by the world's nations.

That's why congregants **Bill Shore** and **Richard Rozen**, working closely with **Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller**, organized this February 2 program about refugee resettlement and what we in the Bay Area can do to help.

"The program will give us an opportunity to test the waters to see how much interest there is at Sherith Israel in getting more involved helping refugees," comments Bill.

Guest speakers include **Avi Rose**, executive director, and **Kathryn Winogura**, volunteer coordinator, of Jewish Family & Community Services East Bay, which has been resettling Syrian and other refugees. They will be joined by **Sergo Adamian**, a refugee from the country of Georgia.

Information: Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, 415-346-1720, x25, or rabbijst@sherithisrael.org.



\$9.25 MILLION ENDOWMENT, from page 1

The share of the building came to Sherith Israel as a bequest many years ago. Along the way Sherith Israel's interest in the property was transferred to the cemetery's endowment, which has been collecting rent over the years. The tenant had an option to buy that expired in 2015. When the tenant declined, the owners decided that, with the city's real estate values at an all-time high, it was a good time to sell.

"In working with the cemetery board over the past year, I learned that they take their fiduciary responsibility very seriously," says Evan. "They took the lead in directing these funds to areas that strengthen the synagogue and the cemetery. Their commitment to protect our resources for the future is impressive."

Richard Rozen, president of the Hills of Eternity board, explains that once the cemetery meets the needs of its endowment, the most important thing facing the congregation is the seismic retrofit. "The sanctuary is such an important part of Sherith Israel historically. Once we satisfy the retrofit requirements, it will leave the congregation in a wonderful place for the future. These funds are really important for the congregation and the financial health of the cemetery," says Richard.

The additional \$5 million means that the Seismic Retrofit Campaign has amassed more than \$13 million of the \$16 million needed to complete the work. "The vast majority of our funding has come from congregants or from the congregation's own resources," says **David Newman**, co-chair of the campaign. "That's a monumental achievement."

Campaign co-chair **Lynn Sedway** adds, "The proceeds from the 5200 Geary sale put us in a strong position to reach out to outside donors and foundations, as well as our congregants, for the remaining \$3 million to complete the project."

Craig Etlin, co-chair of the buildings and grounds committee, notes that the new funding has additional benefits. "It allows us to save money on interest payments since we will need to borrow less, and it lets us to do the rest of the mandatory work in one pass rather than splitting it into further phases."

Craig anticipates that the next round of seismic work will take 10 to 12 months to complete. "We are working with our contractor, Plant Construction Company, to determine the exact start date, taking into account that much of the exterior work needs to be scheduled during the dry months, and balancing this against a desire for the new senior rabbi to be able to celebrate his or her first High Holy Days without disruption."

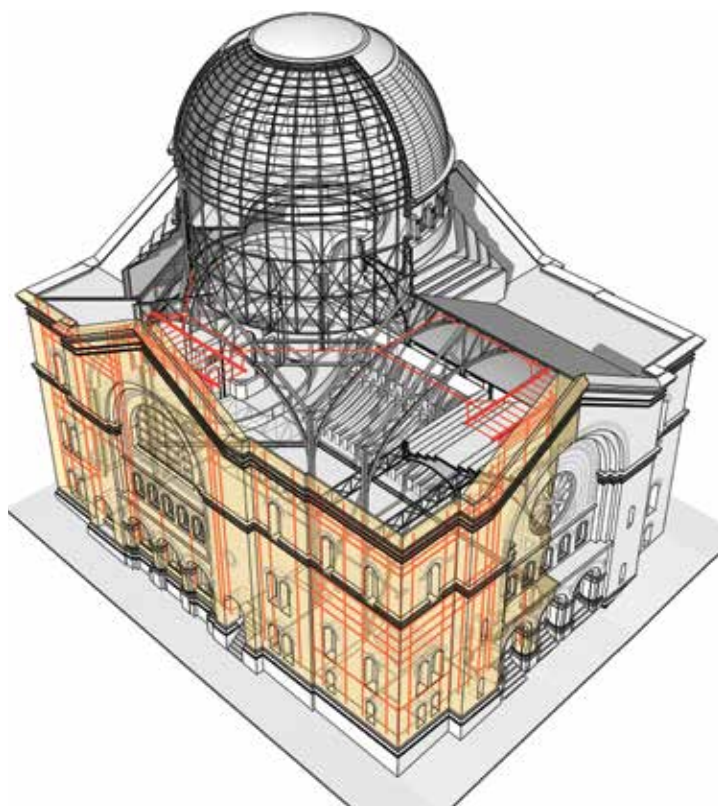
The next phase of the work focuses on putting buttresses along the north wall of the sanctuary building, adding "outriggers" to the foundation for more stability and installing the innovative nitinol tension-tie system in the attic. We will also waterproof the dome and remove the last remnants of the salmon-colored paint that once covered the entire building. Finally, we will make accessibility upgrades, including an ADA-accessible restroom.

Craig points out that portions of the building won't be available during construction. Bart Hall will be unavailable during part of the work, as will offices for the exec-

“ **The cemetery board took the lead in directing these funds to areas that strengthen the synagogue and the cemetery. Their commitment to protect our resources for the future is impressive.** ”

utive director and two of the rabbis. Some of the organ pipes will need to be removed to complete the work, and they will be stored in an area of the balcony to save on storage costs.

"Starting the Phase II work is really exciting," notes Craig. "Our new senior rabbi will be able to concentrate on programming and getting to know the congregants instead of on the retrofit. We will be able to close this chapter of Sherith Israel history." ■



JUST \$3 MILLION TO GO: Proceeds from the sale of 5200 Geary put us within striking distance of fully funding Phase II of the seismic retrofit. The remaining construction (shown above)—foundation work, tension ties and north-wall buttresses—will strengthen our building and fulfill our commitment to the city.

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

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