

SEPTEMBER-  
DECEMBER, 2019

# SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS

*Studio @ Sherith Israel begins September 8*

## CREATING JEWISH SOULS ONE STORY AT A TIME

"I want our students to feel there is a Jewish story they belong in," says Abby Phelps, CSI rabbi educator. She directs Studio @ Sherith Israel, our pre-kindergarten through high school youth education program.

The youngest Studio participants, in preschool, kindergarten and first grade, start off learning Jewish stories. "What are our basic stories, and who are the characters that populate those stories?" asks Rabbi Phelps. "Once students have grounding in the *what* and the *who* of our foundational stories, they are ready to explore questions of Jewish diversity in the higher grades: What do Jews do in the world? How varied can Judaism be?"

As students develop Jewish literacy and maturity, they begin to tackle trickier subjects like anti-Semitism, the founding of Israel, and, as teens, the Holocaust. "I see the entire program as a spiral in which students revisit topics at increasing depth over time," explains Rabbi Phelps.

*Studio @ Sherith Israel continues, page 4*

*Becoming Jewish at Sherith Israel*

## CONVERSION PROGRAM ENRICHES CONGREGATION

At Sherith Israel, we make Jews. Our unique conversion program has guided more than 60 people to become Jews-by-choice in the 13 years since its inception. What makes it unique—and ultimately so successful—is the involvement of both clergy and members of the congregation.

In most congregations, conversion involves only study with the clergy. Former Senior Rabbi Larry Raphael (z"l) envisioned something much richer, according to Lisa Erdberg, who worked with him from the beginning of the program in 2006. Rabbi Raphael's vision included both a structured instructional component—the Introduction to Judaism class—and one-on-one relationships with conversion mentors. These engaged and

knowledgeable congregants help guide conversion students on their personal journeys to Judaism and participation in the Jewish community.

For Rabbi Raphael, the conversion program was critical to strengthening and growing the Jewish community, which he saw as a key part of Sherith Israel's mission.

Rabbi Jessica Graf calls the conversion program "one of Larry Raphael's great legacies. He was committed to welcoming people into CSI wherever they were on their Jewish journey." Rabbi Graf believes that Lindsay Braunig's becoming the first Jew-by-choice to be president of Sherith Israel is an important milestone for the congregation.

*Conversion Program continues, page 6*



**WELCOMING SHABBAT:** Studio @ Sherith Israel students and their parents join Rabbi Abby Phelps for Friday night candle lighting in the sanctuary.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**SHABBAT S'lichot**  
FRIDAY, Sept. 20, 6–8:30 pm

**100 YEARS OF ISRAELI  
MUSIC IN 6 HOURS**  
WEDNESDAYS, Nov. 6, 13, 27 and  
Dec. 4, 6:30–8 pm

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Senior Rabbi

Abby Phelps

Rabbi Educator

David Frommer

Cantor

#### EMERITUS CLERGY

Lawrence Raphael (z"l) Rabbi Emeritus

Martin Weiner Rabbi Emeritus

Martin Feldman Cantor Emeritus

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#### SHERITH ISRAEL NEWS

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## A MOMENT WITH CANTOR DAVID FROMMER

### A NEW CD FOR PRAYER, NOT PERFORMANCE

Several years ago, I released my first CD of congregational music for my former synagogue. I wanted to encourage the congregation to sing, but I became distracted by delusions of joining the immortal ranks of Jan Pearce and Richard Tucker. I hounded the engineer to correct even my smallest vocal imperfections and indeed, the final version sounded perfect. A little *too* perfect. Once, after services, a congregant commented, "I loved the new CD. The singing was beautiful. I just wish it had been you!" In my pursuit of musical perfection, I had lost sight of my true purpose.

That experience informed my recording two years ago of our High Holiday CD *Nashuva* ("Let Us Return"). It also guided my approach to our new CD of Shabbat Morning and Havdalah music, *N'kadeish* ("Let Us Sanctify").

**Thanks to the generous support of the Laszlo N. Tauber Family Foundation, I'm thrilled to announce that *N'kadeish* will be ready for release this fall.**

I chose the verbs *N'kadeish* and *Nashuva* for the titles because they appear in our liturgy in the rare first-person plural imperative. This is used when a community resolves to take action on its own, rather than when it is commanded to do so by a separate authority. When I started at CSI, I assumed, given the majestic interior of the sanctuary, that I would have to teach this congregation how to feel comfortable singing along on Shabbat. I'd have to command



participation as that separate figure of authority. I quickly learned that our community already possessed a robust commitment to participating in services. My task was to nurture and encourage the congregation's willing musical spirit.

*N'kadeish*, like its predecessor, is meant to be that encouragement—to increase everyone's familiarity with some of the newer music we've introduced in Shabbat morning services. Whether you join in the communal celebration of a bar or bat mitzvah or participate in Sh'ma Koleynu, our intimate, lay-led minyan, we want you to feel comfortable singing. Yes, singing in public may not feel natural, especially when it involves Hebrew. But we come to synagogue to pray, not to perform. The point of *singing* prayer, which touches something in our spirits, is not to obscure our imperfections and vulnerabilities, but to acknowledge them and grow stronger with each other's help.

**Psalm 150 (featured on this CD) instructs: *Kol hanehama t'hallel Yah—"Let every being that breathes sing praise to God."*** When we gather at CSI to sanctify Shabbat or return to righteousness on the High Holidays, let us know that our prayers are stronger and their impact greater when we lift our voices together. ■

### PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

***"Whenever the [evil] spirit of God came upon Saul, David would take the lyre and play it..." — I Samuel 16:23***

The spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, first king of Israel and not a pleasing ruler to God. An evil spirit took hold of him. Saul, it appears, suffered from depression or other mental illness. David, who would take the throne after Saul, was not only a warrior but a mu-

sician—as complicated a character as there is in the Bible. David would play, and "Saul would find relief and feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him." Great indeed is the power of music, and so it plays a major role in our weekly and High Holiday worship. ■

# 4 Questions for RABBI JESSICA GRAF

When we gather in our beautiful sanctuary for Kabbalat Shabbat, congregants tell Rabbi Jessica Graf how important it is to come to Sherith Israel and take time from our challenging world to reconsider our place in it. How do we address our world through a Jewish lens? What might Judaism teach us about the confusing times in which we live? Rabbi Graf turns to *Kohelet* (*Ecclesiastes*) to reflect on these core modern Jewish questions.

**Q: As we read the front-page headlines, it's easy to be depressed, yet the world is also filled with large and small acts of grace and kindness. How does Ecclesiastes help us live in the ambiguity of our world?**

**A:** *Kohelet* is my favorite Jewish text. (It happens to be Cantor Frommer's, too.) This is the text we read each year on Sukkot. And like that festival, *Kohelet* addresses the fragility of life. It teaches us that we live in a very delicate balance between despair and joy. And daily, we are called upon to address the harshness of reality while also celebrating life. Chapter 3 begins with these words: "Everything has an appointed season and there is a time for everything under the sun." Words of wisdom from the past, this verse reminds us that each generation has its challenges. There is time to enjoy even as we work to fix the problems in our world.

**Q: Chapter 3, which everyone knows from Pete Seeger's song, sets up a series of dichotomies: love and hate, build and tear down, plant and uproot. In each pair one element is hopeful, one less so. How do we act in those less hopeful seasons?**

**A:** I love these poetic verses. They reflect the real tension in our lives.

**"There is a time to plant and a time to uproot that which is planted"** (*Kohelet* 3:2). As Jews, we always look to the future, to a better time, to a brighter world. We are driven by a mandate to repair the world and to bring about a messianic era. We educate, planting for a better future. We work to make change for the generations yet to come.

**"There is a time to break and a time to build"** (*Kohelet* 3:3). We build our community, our support network. We rely on each other to sustain us when times are hard. We create an unbreakable network of people. We strengthen our bonds—the bonds between people who share values and vision.

**"There is a time to be silent and a time to speak"** (*Kohelet* 3:7). We must stand up for what we believe. When our values are compromised, we "pray with our feet," as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel famously said as he marched in Selma, Alabama, during the civil rights movement. As Jews, we are obligated to speak up and speak out. We speak for ourselves and those who have no voice.

**"There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to wail and a time to dance"** (*Kohelet* 3:4). We end Jewish weddings with the breaking of a glass—the ultimate reminder that happiness and sadness are intertwined. We know that there is value in mourning and in weeping. But we also are taught to laugh heartily and to celebrate the wonders of our world and our lives. We fill ourselves with gratitude—recognizing the miracles all around us. And we dance joyously whenever we can!

**Q: How do we square *Kohelet's* message of futility with Reform Judaism's persistent call to pursue justice?**

**A:** Throughout *Kohelet*, the author uses language about the futility of life. Despite our best efforts, we will die. And sometimes, life will feel pointless. The text asks us to consider how to live, given our reality. We are allowed to let our minds wander for a few minutes, to contemplate a sense of futility. But before we reach a place of despair, *Kohelet* snaps us out of our ruminations. *Kohelet* instructs us to educate; build community; speak up; and celebrate. Ultimately, *Kohelet* suggests that we engage fully in our lives, since everything is fleeting.

**Q: What wisdom can *Kohelet* offer us as we approach the High Holidays?**

**A:** We are a people of paradoxes. Hope for the future has kept our people alive through thousands of years of challenges. This hope keeps us going today. As we enter our High Holiday season, these words of *Kohelet* remind us of the work ahead. This is a season to reflect on renewal and hope; on repair and forgiveness; on rejoicing and gratitude.

Shanah tovah! ■





**ALEPH-BET:** B. Mitzvah Boot Camp student **Sophia Gonzalez** studies Hebrew in preparation for her b. mitzvah ceremony.

**What's a b. mitzvah?** B. mitzvah is a new way to talk about bar/bat/b'nai mitzvah that includes all genders. A b. mitzvah is a "child of commandment," a person who can fully take part in Jewish ritual and ethical life. B. mitzvah are expected to take responsibility for their actions, uphold Jewish values and give back to their communities by celebrating holidays and life cycle events, visiting the sick, comforting the bereaved, and helping make a minyan. B. mitzvah are also eligible to join our youth group, CITY!

## STUDIO @ SHERITH ISRAEL, from page 1

In her second year at Studio @ Sherith Israel, Rabbi Phelps is integrating the curriculum into a continuous arc. A logical progression from topic to topic engages children developmentally as they move from pre-K through to high school.

The biggest change is organizing the kindergarten-to-fifth-grade students into three classes—K/1, 2/3 and 4/5—operating on a rotating two-year cycle. "We are combining these grades to build stronger inter-grade relationships and to give students the chance to mentor and be mentored by each other," says Rabbi Phelps.

During the first year, K/1 students focus on Jewish stories and major characters of the Torah and the Prophets, including Abraham and Sarah, Joseph and his brothers, and Moses, Aaron and Miriam. In the second year, they encounter Ruth and Naomi, holiday stories from Purim and Chanukah, and Jewish folktales.

Students in the 2/3 class explore questions of *where*, *when* and *how*. This includes histories, practices and holidays from different Jewish communities around the world. Activities include cooking (always popular!), service projects and outings that demonstrate Jewish values.

The 4/5 class will delve into questions of *why*. They will investigate tricky questions of Jewish practice, like: why do Jews put stones on graves, and why have a bris for a baby boy? "These kinds of questions lend themselves to a journalistic approach," notes Rabbi Phelps. To facilitate that kind of inquiry, she has paired 4/5 students with **Lea Loeb**, a journalism student at San Francisco State. Lea will help the students prepare presentations in various media.

**Sixth-grade stands on its own.** "It's the B. Mitzvah Boot Camp year that precedes a student's bar or bat mitzvah," says Rabbi Phelps. Sixth-graders nail down their Hebrew and become familiar with fundamental prayers. They also discuss what it means to become bar or bat mitzvah in Jewish society. **Noa Levy** teaches sixth grade in conjunction with the clergy. Parents are invited to join in on the days when the clergy teach. Noa also teaches adult Hebrew at CSI.

In another innovation, the seventh grade joins Teens @ Studio, which meets twice monthly on Friday evenings.

Grades seven and eight learn about the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel with **Natalie Weizman**. Grades nine through twelve explore contemporary Jewish topics like anti-Semitism, Zionism and anti-Zionism, racism and intersectionality with Rabbi Phelps.

"These topics are hard for everyone, so it's very important to model civil discourse around Israel, Zionism and racism," comments Rabbi Phelps. Teens tell her they are stressed about these hot-button subjects and want help thinking them through. "I've also heard from parents who worry about whether their children will be able to have a civil conversation about Israel once they get to college," she notes. "Parents want their teens to be able to hold their own."

**The success of a comprehensive program like Studio depends on the teachers who staff it.** Rabbi Phelps has been thinking a lot about how to place teachers where they can best use their special skills.

Teachers for the youngest children, **Chloé Erdan** (pre-K) and **Helena Gershwin** (K/1), studied speech and language pathology at SFSU and are adept storytellers. **Victoria Poslavsky** (2/3) is a public policy student at SFSU who spent her summer in Tel Aviv through Onward Israel. Lea Loeb (4/5) studied journalism at SFSU and is an editorial assistant for ROUTE Magazine. Noa Levy (6th-grade B. Mitzvah Boot Camp) is Israeli. A jazz-rock fusion singer, she appears in regular gigs at Café Claude and Zingari Ristorante & Jazz Club. Teachers for the teens include Natalie Weizman, our youth programs manager, and Rabbi Phelps.

**At the end of the next school year, Rabbi Phelps hopes her students will have demonstrated curiosity, critical thinking, a willingness to question, and *menschlichkeit*, or kindness.** "One of the values I most want to impress upon our kids, even though it's wildly unfashionable, is humility," says Rabbi Phelps. "Humility is the ground on which real confidence is built. It's OK not to know; it's OK to investigate; it's OK to question."

Rabbi Phelps acknowledges that these are more values than skills. "These are the things I most want them to be able practice in the world, alongside things like sounding out Hebrew, knowing essential prayers and being able to tell the stories of our ancestors." ■



## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH GORDON GLADSTONE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### LET THERE BE LIGHT

**It is a truism of nonprofit life that general operating dollars are the hardest to raise.** It is far easier to raise dollars for something esoteric or exciting than for paying utility bills. I can recall learning in a nonprofit accounting class the perils of having lots of restricted money in your bank account and being unable to keep the lights on without unrestricted funds to pay PG&E.

All of which flashed through my mind when a donor approached me this spring and asked, "What building repair projects would you like funded?" Once we clarified the budget, I presented a few

wish-list items from our extensive deferred maintenance list, mostly centered on the Temple House, which has been far from the center of attention during the seismic retrofit. The project we chose was to fund the replacement of all of our fluorescent lights with state-of-the-art LED lights.

**Over a period of a few weeks in June spaces around the synagogue became brighter.** A combination of replacing older fixtures that were missing bulbs or ballasts and the greater lumen output of the LED lights meant that there were hallways, kitchens and classrooms that

suddenly appeared larger, warmer and more modern. The most dramatic effect was seen in Newman Pavilion, where the aging 36-watt compact fluorescent fixtures were replaced with 18-watt LED fixtures. With the same number of fixtures we cut our power consumption in half and increased the amount of light. This is a donation that will pay dividends for years to come.

Sometimes the donations we receive not only let us pay the bills, but they are the lights we keep on. ■

### Creating community connections

## EXPLORING A CHAVURAH PROGRAM FOR CSI

**It is said that if you make five friends at your church or synagogue, you'll stay involved.** With that in mind, CSI president Lindsay Braunig is encouraging the Membership Committee and the CSI Board of Trustees to explore bringing a *chavurah* or small-group program back to Sherith Israel.

"There's a real appetite for deeper community connections. It's important to form personal connections and friendships, so when you come to Tot Shabbat or the congregational Seder, it's because you're excited to see people you care about and not out of a sense of obligation," says Lindsay. "It's what keeps me coming back."

One way to build friendships and deeper connections is through a *chavurah*. Typically, a *chavurah* is a small Jewish friendship group that meets informally about once a month. The group can be based on anything, such as age cohort, outside interests or neighborhood. It can center on study, Shabbat dinners, family

outings, or interests like books, movies, sports or hiking.

The modern *chavurah* movement arose in the 1960s as a reaction to large suburban synagogues where people didn't know each other very well. Originally an independent movement, the concept of *chavurot* was adopted by synagogues as a way to engage their members. Sherith Israel had a *chavurah* program in the 1990s.

**Lindsay is investigating whether a *chavurah* program is currently a good fit for Sherith Israel.** She is talking to lay leaders and executive staff at other congregations, as well as leaders within the Union for Reform Judaism who have experience with *chavurot* in a congregational setting. She has also asked the Membership Committee to form a subgroup to study the issue further, including initiating a couple of pilot groups. Membership chair **Christina Jefferson** will hold focus groups for the congregation after the High Holidays to learn more about what's working for

people at CSI and what they think might improve their experience.

"We're trying to figure out the right size for a *chavurah*, how many people should already know each other, what's the best way to invite people," notes Lindsay. Those are the details. The broader theme is deepening community engagement.

Lindsay has already begun to do just that by meeting every new member who joins. "I want to let them know that they are now a part of a community. When they come to High Holiday services, there will be someone there who knows and can welcome them." ■

**MAKING FRIENDS, CREATING COMMUNITY:** CSI board member and Membership Committee chair **Christina Jefferson** (left) and president **Lindsay Braunig** (right) are working to create a *chavurah* program at Sherith Israel as a way to help people make deeper connections with each other and a stronger relationship to Sherith Israel.





## CONVERSION PROGRAM, from page 1

**People exploring becoming Jewish at Sherith Israel begin their process with our clergy.** The Introduction to Judaism class follows, along with a beginning Hebrew class to develop prayerbook literacy. Mentors create meaningful opportunities for students to engage with a variety of Jewish experiences—worship, Shabbat dinners, social action work, and trips to Jewish museums and events. Mentors also address questions like what it is like to be Jewish vis-a-vis the greater community. They also fill in gaps in specific knowledge students feel remain after the class.

Finally, the student again meets with the clergy to “close the circle.” The process is complete when the student appears before a *beit din*, a three-person “court” of Jewish adults, including one member of the CSI clergy. The *beit din* assesses the student’s readiness for conversion and accompanies the new Jew-by-choice to the *mikveh* (ritual bath) before acknowledgement and welcome by the congregation.

**Susan Borkin** has conducted post-conversion evaluation interviews with more than two dozen new Jews. She reported recently to the clergy and Lisa that students thought their experiences were successful. The evaluation interviews help Lisa and the clergy know what parts of the program are working and which can be improved.

**When the program began, mentors didn’t necessarily know what was expected of them.** “There was initially some concern that the mentors were all taking different approaches, that there wasn’t any commonality,” Lisa remembers. “Larry asked me to create some order, and I drafted **Helaine Weinstein** to help.”

They decided that choosing Judaism at Sherith Israel should be like eating at a buffet. Prospective converts are encouraged to try out Sherith Israel’s various programs and activities and find what speaks to them and what is the comfortable point of intersection.

One of the biggest messages the program conveys is that Judaism is not monolithic. “There are many ways to be Jewish,” Lisa says. “You have to find what works for you.” She adds, “It’s interesting because so many of our students come from Catholic or fundamentalist backgrounds, which have a much more dogmatic and hierarchical approach. That definitely presents a hurdle they have to get over.”

**Many potential converts coming from more rigid faith traditions rebelled in a variety of ways when they were young, frequently by asking too many questions.** “When they were old enough,” Lisa notes, “they started exploring other options and found that Judaism was one they wanted to explore further.”

Other common themes pop up. Growing up, many conversion students had close Jewish friends. They were around those families and included in Jewish celebrations, giving them some knowledge of Jewish traditions and practices.

Other students have Jewish partners with whom they’ve agreed to raise their children in a single faith tradition. However, both Rabbi Graf and Lisa caution against conversion to make a spouse or partner happy. The clergy and mentors discourage people from converting simply because they are getting mar-



**PREPARING TO CHOOSE JUDAISM:** “Mentor macher” **Lisa Erdberg** (right) studies with prospective convert **Ingrid Apter** (center) and her mentor, **Shira Shore**. CSI’s unique conversion program pairs students with lay mentors, who guide them through the process of becoming Jewish. After being part of the Sherith Israel community for nearly 40 years, Ingrid is choosing Judaism to honor her late husband, **Gary**, and out of gratitude to the congregation for the support she received after his death. She also wants to be able to pass the Torah to her granddaughter at her bat mitzvah next January.

ried and want to please their in-laws. “Conversion for someone else’s reasons doesn’t stick,” says Rabbi Graf.

**The biggest challenge for students, says Lisa, is “all the ethnic baggage that comes with being Jewish.”** The good news, she says, is that the baggage is changing along with the face of Judaism in the United States. “The baggage that we grew up with—the post-war, Holocaust baggage—is diminishing.” For many students, the recent rise in anti-Semitism and the violence associated with it is challenging. “When you become Jewish, sadly, you put yourself at a certain degree of risk, and you have to be willing to sign on.”

In Rabbi Graf’s experience, “the hardest thing for a prospective convert is being able to authentically represent Judaism in the world. ‘When do I know enough?’ ‘When have I read enough?’ ‘When is my Hebrew good enough?’”

She notes that the shift from an intellectual understanding of Judaism to an emotional connection to the Jewish community can be difficult. “The hard thing I’ve heard from people is ‘How do I react when I hear someone say something anti-Semitic, and it’s about me and not just a concept?’ or ‘What does it mean when I hear people talking about Israel, and now it’s my homeland?’”

**The program’s structure—formal class work combined with individualized mentorship—was established from the beginning but has evolved.** However, it has not changed significantly under Rabbi Graf and **Cantor David Frommer**’s leadership. “Jessica and David have a slightly different approach than Larry,” notes Lisa, “but it’s more a matter of style. The basic outlines are still the same.”

Conversion Program continues, page 7

*CSI bus ad rolls again*

## SPICY MESSAGE HITS THE STREETS

Matzo ball soup + Sriracha hot sauce = “a synagogue that welcomes people of different backgrounds.”

That was the message that **Andrew Arruda** and **Meghan Marmor** got when the Sherith Israel bus ad rolled by last summer. According to Andrew, they were shul-shopping and were considering looking at Sherith Israel when a Muni bus passed them with CSI’s colorful imagery.

“It was a sign,” says Andrew. “It seemed like a really good idea to check it out.”

They attended Yom Kippur services last year and experienced the warmth and inclusiveness that the ad promised. For Andrew, who was raised Catholic but has a college minor in Jewish studies, Sherith Israel “felt like a good place to explore becoming Jewish.”

According to **Rabbi Jessica Graf**, Andrew and Meghan’s experience was not unique. “We’ve had a few people who specifically cited the bus ad as the reason that they came to us.”

Rabbi Graf acknowledges that a few long-time members found



the ad a little undignified, but she notes that the message is directed at potential younger members, many of whom are in interfaith relationships. She says the ad “did what we wanted it to do, sending a clear message that we’re thinking outside the usual synagogue box.”

The decision to run the ad again was simple. “It was a really good ad,” she notes, “and there are a lot more people out there to attract.” ■



**DADS NIGHT OUT:** Fifteen Sherith Israel fathers of young children got together at House of Prime Rib in July for an evening of dad talk. At one table were (clockwise from lower left) **Rolfe Winkler, Devon Strolovitch, Aaron Johnson, David Hollander, Erad Fridman, Steven Lurie, Peter Sadler, Jonathan Graf** and **Art Klein**. **Cantor David Frommer** and **Lucas Zier** organized the dinner. Everyone enjoyed it so much they are planning to get together quarterly.

## CONVERSION PROGRAM, from page 6

One change Lisa welcomes is that the Introduction to Judaism class has expanded and become more comprehensive. “We have more teachers—Jessica, David, **Rabbi Abby Phelps**, executive director **Gordon Gladstone** and I are all teaching. We teach to our strengths, which are considerable and diverse.” Hebrew is now a required part of the conversion program.

In another modest change, Rabbi Graf named Lisa as Sherith Israel’s “mentor macher.” The title represents what Lisa already has been doing, but in a more formal way—making sure mentors are happy by checking in periodically with each one who is currently working with a student.

**Lisa sees integrating Jews-by-choice into the congregation as her contribution to the long-term health of Sherith Israel and the Jewish community.** She believes the program is as important for CSI as for the students. She notes that it has been

a major factor in bringing in new members over the years. On a deeper level, “It’s a way of living our values. We pride ourselves on being a welcoming and inclusive congregation, and we want to give everybody the opportunity to have the wonderful experience of being Jewish.”

Finally, people who make a conscious decision and work to become Jewish “enrich our community so profoundly,” Lisa says. They add new voices to our conversations and perhaps ask questions we have forgotten how to ask. Many have made significant contributions to the congregation.

She points to converts she has mentored, like board members **Katie Zier** and **Amy Widdowson**, as examples of Jews-by-choice who have played important roles at Sherith Israel. “It was incredibly moving for me to see them on the bimah as leaders of the congregation at the High Holidays.” ■



# WHAT'S HAPPENING

## SHABBAT SERVICES

### FRIDAY EVENINGS

**6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat**  
**7:15 pm: Kiddush and oneg**  
Join us to welcome Shabbat.

### LATE MINYAN WITH CANTOR DAVID FROMMER

**Fridays, monthly, 7:30 pm**  
**Sept. 20, Oct. 18, Nov. 8, Dec 20**  
Song and prayer in the round beneath our majestic dome.  
*Information: Cantor Frommer, dfrommer@sherithisrael.org or 415.346.1720, x19.*

### SATURDAY MORNINGS

**9:15 am: Torah Study with bagels and lox, coffee and tea.**

**10:30 am: Sh'ma Koleynu** lay-led Shabbat morning service.

**Noon: Kiddush lunch**, twice a month; see *Under the Dome* emails for dates.

## High Holiday Schedule

SEE PAGE 13

## Special Shabbats

### SHABBAT S'lichot

**Friday, Sept. 20, 6–8:30 pm**  
Combined with Kabbalat Shabbat. Prepare for the High Holidays with Rabbi Jessica Graf and Cantor David Frommer. We conclude by dressing our Torahs in their white High Holiday mantles.

### SHABBAT SUKKOT

**Friday, Oct. 18**  
**5:30 pm: Yizkor**  
**6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat Sukkot**  
**7:15 pm: New-member welcome dinner**  
New to Sherith Israel this year? Dinner's on us. Everyone is welcome to celebrate the harvest festival.

✓ *Dinner: dairy or vegan option. Children under 12 and new members, free; students, \$10; adults, \$20.*

**8 pm: Late Minyan** with Cantor David Frommer in the Sukkah.

### Special lecture

### RABBI ABRAHAM: LINCOLN AND THE JEWS OF HIS DAY

**With historian Gary Zola**  
**Friday, Nov. 22**

**6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat**  
**7:30 pm: Dinner and talk**  
During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln stood up for American Jews, who embraced him as a man with a Jewish soul. Historian Gary Phillip Zola speaks about his book, *We Called Him Rabbi Abraham: Lincoln and American Jewry*, a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award. Dr. Zola, executive director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, specializes in the history of American Reform Judaism. *Part of our Democracy and Resistance Series.*

✓ *Dinner: children under 5, free; 5–12 years, \$12; students, \$18; adults, \$24.*

### SHABBAT CHANUKAH

**Friday, Dec. 27**  
**6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat:** Bring your chanukiot for a communal candle-lighting during services.  
**7:15 pm: Dinner and concert** featuring live music with Peter Bonos and friends.  
✓ *Children under 5, free; 5–12 years, \$12; students, \$18; adults, \$24.*

## Adult

### INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM: EXPLORING JEWISH CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

**Wednesdays, 6:30–8 pm**  
**Oct. 23, 2019–Feb. 12, 2020**

Explore a wide range of topics, including Jewish texts, history, ritual and thought. Whether you've never set foot in a Jewish classroom or have hazy memories of Sunday school, this class of adult-level basics is for you.

✓ *Free for Sherith Israel members; non-members: \$180.*

### 100 YEARS OF ISRAELI MUSIC IN 6 HOURS

**Noa Levy**  
**Wednesdays, Nov. 6, 13, 27 and Dec. 4**  
**6:30–8 pm**

**Concert and dinner:**

**Friday, Dec. 6, 7:30 pm**

Join accomplished jazz-rock fusion vocalist (and CSI Hebrew teacher) Noa Levy for a foot-tapping audio-visual lecture series. Discover the wide range of Israeli music from its early beginnings to the modern era. Noa's entertaining approach covers how Israeli music was affected by, and remains directly related to, the nation's birth, independence, wars, times of peace and maturation. Most of all, have fun!

✓ *Class fee: \$36 or \$9 per class.*

✓ *Dec. 6 dinner and concert: children under 5, free; 5–12 years, \$12; students, \$18; adults, \$24.*

### EIGHT NIGHTS: A STAGED READING

**New play by Jennifer Maisel**  
**Saturday, Oct. 12, 7:30 pm**

Acclaimed playwright Jennifer Maisel presents a nineteen-year-old German-Jewish refugee failing to escape Nazi Germany on the SS St. Louis. Sent back to Europe, she survives a concentration camp and reunites with her father ten years later. The play takes place over eight nights of Chanukah—and over eight decades of the survivor's life. It explores the refugee experience, African-American trauma, Japanese-American internment during World War II and the current Syrian crisis. *Net proceeds benefit HIAS. Part of our Democracy and Resistance Series.*

### LATKES AND VODKAS

**Thursday, Dec. 26, 7:30 pm**  
Chanukah party for 20- and 30-some-things with cocktails, food and music. *Free.*



✓ **SHIVA LAB:  
A "HOW-TO" EXPERIENCE**

**Presented by the Bay Area  
Jewish Healing Center**

**January 14, 21, 28, 6:30–8:30 pm**

Learn how to lead, host and support a Shiva minyan during this three-part series. We'll meet in congregants' homes to replicate a typical Shiva experience. You'll gain a greater understanding and confidence in offering support during the period of mourning. **Registration required; we ask participants to commit to all three sessions.** Locations, TBA. Information: Rabbi Graf, rabbigraf@sherithisrael.org.

## Ongoing

### MAH JONGG

**Thursdays, 6:30–8:30 pm**

Join congregants and other mah jongg enthusiasts for drop-in games. Information: Erin Gordon, eringordonsf@gmail.com.

### PRIME TIME CLUB

**Monthly lunch and learn**

**Second Fridays, noon–2 pm**

✓ \$10 for lunch; presentation only, free.

**Sept. 13:** Nancy Sheftel-Gomes discusses the upcoming Sherith Israel trip to the U.S./Mexico border and explains the history, context and intent of the delegation.

**Oct. 11:** Laura Olson presents "Water For a Thirsty World: Israel Offers Global Technology." See how Israel has created a surplus of water in an arid region and offers other countries techniques to reduce water insecurity. Hear remarkably creative solutions, from seed selection to plants that use the internet to tell farmers what they need!

**Nov. 8:** Rabbi Julie Saxe-Taller, senior California organizer for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC-CA), speaks about Reform Judaism's California-wide network of congregations bringing our Jewish values to bear on statewide policy.

**Dec. 13:** TBA

### JEWISH BOOK CLUB

**Mondays, 7 pm**

Participants present books (paperback only) with a Jewish theme, author or historical setting. Information: Julie House, juliehousesf@gmail.com.

**Sept. 23:** *Outwitting History: The Amazing Adventures of a Man Who Rescued a Million Yiddish Books* by Aaron Lansky. Discussion facilitated by Roslyn Rhodes.

**Oct. 28:** *The Ragged Edge of Night* by Olivia Hawker. Discussion facilitated by Sally Flanzer.

**Nov. 25:** *He, She, and It* by Marge Piercy. Discussion facilitated by Joan Korenman.

### ADULT INTERMEDIATE HEBREW

Noa Levy

**Sundays, 1–2 pm**

Hebrew for the advanced beginner, focusing on reading and deeply understanding prayers from our siddur. Information: Noa Levy, noalevy8@gmail.com.

### HAMOTZI AND CHICKEN SOUPERS

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

**Chicken Soupers: Sundays monthly,**

**Sept. 8, Oct. 6, Nov. 3, Dec. 1, noon–4 pm**

**SF Interfaith Winter Shelter: Dec. 24, 25 and 26**

Each week HaMotzi volunteers prepare meals for two shelters in San Francisco. Chicken Souper volunteers cook and deliver meals for JFCS clients each month. On **Dec. 24, 25 and 26** HaMotzi also prepares meals for the SF Interfaith Winter Shelter. To volunteer: Nancy Sheftel Gomes, hamotzi@sherithisrael.org.

## Youth Education & Programs

### FIRST DAY OF

**STUDIO @ SHERITH ISRAEL**

**Sunday, Sept. 8, 9:30 am–12:30 pm**

### FIRST DAY OF TEENS @ STUDIO

**Friday, Sept. 13, 5–8 pm**

Teens participate in educational programming, attend Friday night services and enjoy dinner together afterward.

### STUDIO WELCOME-BACK BBQ

**Sunday, Sept. 22, 10:30 am–1 pm**

**Stern Grove Pine Lake Picnic Area**

Say hello to old friends and meet new ones at our kickoff BBQ. Enjoy great food, games and prizes.

✓ Registration: Rabbi Abby Phelps, aphelps@sherithisrael.org.

### CEMETERY VISIT AND BOOK BURIAL

**Sunday, Oct. 6, 10 am–12:30 pm**

**Hills of Eternity, Colma**

Join our 4th–6th grade classes to tour our historic cemetery, take part in our annual book burial and enjoy a picnic lunch on the beautiful cemetery grounds.

Information: Rabbi Abby Phelps, aphelps@sherithisrael.org.

### SITY SUKKOT SLEEPOVER

**Sunday, Oct. 18, 6 pm–Oct. 19, 9 am**

Join your SITY friends for an overnight of hygge in the sukkah!

## Sherith Littles:

*Programs for families  
with children 5 and under*

### BACK-TO-SHUL SHABBAT DINNER AND TOT SHABBAT

**Friday, Sept. 13, 5 pm**

Enjoy a lively family Shabbat with Cantor David Frommer and Rabbi Jessica Graf followed by a family-friendly dinner.

### FAMILY ROSH HASHANAH CELEBRATION

**Saturday, Sept. 21, 10:30 am**

**Lafayette Park**

Cantor Frommer leads a creative, fun musical service in the spirit of the High Holidays. Snacks provided. Co-sponsored by Jewish Baby Network SF and PJ Library.

### SHABBAT IN THE SUKKAH

**Saturday, Oct. 19, 10:30 am–noon**

Join Cantor Frommer for a song-filled morning in our sukkah with kid-friendly snacks and fun.

### LITTLES CHANUKAH PARTY

**Sunday, Dec. 22, 4–6 pm**

Calling all families for a Chanukah extravaganza! Join us for a fabulous free event with music, crafts, a little bounce house, dreidel photo booth, stories, menorah lighting and latkes. Co-sponsored by Jewish Baby Network SF and PJ Library.

## ✓ = REGISTRATION REQUIRED

Three ways to register:

1. **ONLINE** [www.sherithisrael.org/programs](http://www.sherithisrael.org/programs)
2. **EMAIL** [programs@sherithisrael.org](mailto:programs@sherithisrael.org)
3. **PHONE** 415.346.1720

*Focused on values and heritage*

### PROFILE: DENISE AND ERIK MIGDAIL

**Two core Jewish values guide Denise and Erik Migdail in both their chosen careers and volunteer work at Congregation Sherith Israel:** teaching our children and preserving our heritage.

Erik teaches English at Carlmont High School in Belmont, helping students develop an understanding and appreciation of important, influential literature. As an educator, he was a key member of the search committee that in 2018 recruited **Rabbi Abby Phelps** as our rabbi educator. She now heads Studio @ Sherith Israel, our experiential, interactive Jewish education program for preschool through high school. “Part of the goal was to make Sherith Israel’s religious school a magnet,” Erik recalls. “We wanted someone who could do that and have that vision, and that was Rabbi Phelps.”

Erik is in his second term on the CSI Board of Trustees and second term as secretary of the board. He also serves as a board liaison to the Hills of Eternity board.

If the Jewish value of education drives Erik, Denise embraces the equally important value of preserving our heri-

tage and repairing the world. A textile conservator at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, she brought her expertise to Sherith Israel’s buildings and grounds committee during the seismic retrofit, helping decide how best to care for our historic stained-glass windows. The Rose and Prophet windows on the California Street side of the building, in need of repair, were sent to a workshop in Iowa. There, Denise explains, they were cleaned and refurbished. When the windows were finally reinstalled, they revealed colors that most congregants had never seen.

As Denise sees it, retrofitting the synagogue building reinforced the Sherith Israel community. “I like where we are now as a congregation,” she says. “Worn blue jeans are better patched. For all the change that Sherith Israel has been through, it still feels welcoming and warm.” Erik agrees, “We’re at such an exciting place in the spiritual and social life of the synagogue.”

**Sherith Israel’s big welcome mat was out for Denise and Erik in 1990 when they moved to San Francisco from New York.** For Denise, it was a homecoming; her parents and grandparents attended services at Sherith Israel and made sure

that Denise, her brother, **Todd**, younger sister **Cindy Friedman**, and older sister, former Sherith Israel president **Valerie Jahan**, had a strong Jewish upbringing. Erik was raised in a secular family in a New York suburb with a definite Jewish cultural identity. “A bagels and lox Jew,” he says, but with no religious roots. “I describe myself as a Jew who converted to Judaism.”

Sherith Israel is the Migdail family’s spiritual home. Denise and Erik were married here by then-Associate **Rabbi David Meyer**. Their sons, **Zachary** and **Max**, both became bar mitzvah under the sanctuary dome. Zachary, 23, a student in religious studies at the University of San Francisco, works part-time at CSI as a key part of our tech support team. Max, 21, is a senior at Tufts University with a dual major in English and environmental studies.

**A compassionate community, the sense of belonging it nurtures and family ties spanning four generations connect the Migdails to Sherith Israel.** Says Denise, “When we go to services on Friday night, I appreciate being in the moment and having the opportunity to take stock of all that is really good and go forward.”

Erik, whose enthusiasm is palpable, believes Sherith Israel is “a very focused place to put your efforts to do good work in the world when there’s so much work that needs to be done.” His involvement with CSI goes beyond governance. “The way that Sherith Israel practices spirituality moves far beyond the words and into a personal engagement that feels very real to me,” he says. “It creates a lot of space for me to remind myself to be my best self.” ■



**DENISE, ERIK AND ZACK MIGDAIL:** CSI is important to each of them. Denise helped conserve our historic stained-glass windows during the seismic retrofit. Erik is secretary of the board and helped recruit **Rabbi Abby Phelps** to be our rabbi educator, and Zack keeps our IT up and running.



Summer fun: **Ike and Toby Braunig**, sons of **Lindsay and Warren Braunig**, spent two weeks at Camp Tawonga, where Toby was in a cabin with one of **Lonnie Zwerin's** grandsons. As if that wasn't enough summer camp, the boys followed it up immediately with three more weeks at the URJ Jacobs Camp in Utica, Mississippi, where they hung out with six of their cousins. Lindsay reports they had a wonderful time at both...

Also enjoying sleep-away camp for the first time this summer, **Naima Sheftel-Gomes** went to Be'chol Lashon camp at Walker Creek Ranch in Marin County. She was in good company. Big sister **Satya** was a counselor and **Shoshanah Alessi** an older camper. Camp Be'chol Lashon is a multicultural Jewish leadership camp that teaches about global Jewish diversity and inspires a love of Judaism...

Former CSI board president **David Newman**, currently the chair of the Jewish Community Relations Council's public policy committee, helped draft the JCRC's statement on democracy. The statement makes the case for Jewish community support for democratic values and institutions, arguing that Jews and other minorities prosper where there are robust democratic institutions. You can read the full statement at [jcrc.org](http://jcrc.org)...

Also on the JCRC website, you can find *Judaism, Civility and Reproductive Choice*, a guest blog post by **Rabbi Abby Phelps** about the intersection of civil discourse, reproductive choice and Jewish thought and tradition. She noted the sad state of political discourse today and the many Jewish teachings and values we can call on in support of reproductive choice. Check out [jcrc.org](http://jcrc.org) for Rabbi Abby's column...

CSI music director **Jonathan Dimmock** is having a great summer touring historic musical venues in Europe, including the Hildebrandt organ of Naumburg, the largest surviving organ played by J.S. Bach. What a treat for our own master organist...

With synagogue security on everyone's minds after so many tragedies in the past year, **Gordon Gladstone**, our executive director and chair of BATA, Bay Area Temple Administrators, was quoted in the *J.* this July about the efforts synagogue staffs are taking to keep congregants safe...

And in the same issue, the *J.'s Our Crowd* column lays some *kavod* on **Cantor David Frommer** for his gig singing the national anthem at Oracle Park during Giants' Jewish Heritage Night, August 27. As the *J.* notes, "after leading Seders in Kabul, singing one little song in Oracle Park should be a piece of cake." Go Giants! Go Cantor David...

In June, **Nancy Flaxman** and **Lila McCarthy** celebrated their 30th anniversary as a couple and their 11th wedding anniversary. They were the first same-gender couple married by **Rabbi Larry Raphael** (z"l) in the short window in 2008 when same-gender couples could be married. It was another five years before gay and lesbian marriages resumed in California. They and Rabbi Raphael hoped many others would follow...

Congrats to **Christina Jefferson**, board member and membership chair. This June she represented Sephora on a panel in New York about LGBTQI rights sponsored by Sephora's parent, LVMH (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy). LVMH signed the UN Standards of Conduct, which agrees to respect the human rights of all workers, customers and community members and to eliminate discrimination against LGBTQI employees...

This summer CSI said *l'hitraot* to **Rabbi Samantha Kahn**. Rabbi Kahn, the director of Sherith Littles, moved home to Florida from California to assume the position of senior rabbi at Temple Sinai of Sarasota. We wish her well...

The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote about a wonderful project spearheaded by **Andre Rothblatt**, son of **Agnes** and the late **Shike Rothblatt**. Andre, an architect, was one of the "original gardeners," volunteers who won community challenge grants from the city to landscape a formerly unkempt hill in Bernal Heights. Andre designed a gorgeous new staircase with zigzags of colored tile, enlivening the neighborhood and the city...

In teen news, next year promises to be an exciting one for **Shoshanah Alessi**. She has been accepted into the Diller Teen Fellows program, an immersive leadership development program for 10th and 11th-graders from around the world. Shoshanah will visit Israel as a part of this exciting program...

Congrats to our emerging 9th graders: **Alana David** is heading to Lowell High, where her brother **Noah** is in his senior year. She joins juniors **David Milberg** and **Max Klivans** and sophomore **Sylvia Benjamin**. **Kevin Kerzhner** starts Lincoln High, and **Milo Stern** enters Wallenberg High...

CSI college-bound students include **Adam Schwarz** heading to Lewis and Clark and **Elizabeth Flaherman** who is off to Columbia. And **Nancy Sheftel-Gomes'** granddaughter **Satya** just started Occidental.

OMG! #sweet16. **Emmy Etlin** and **Jessica Schwarz** just got their driver licenses. Be careful out there! ■

*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.*



**Rabbi Jessica Graf will lead an immigration study trip to Arizona this spring.** The Sherith Israel delegation will explore the complexities of immigration and life along the U.S.-Mexico border. The trip, organized through Border Links, a Tucson-based nonprofit, will enable CSI members to hear immigrants' stories and learn about life in the Nogales area.

Scheduled for March 15–20, 2020, we have space for up to 14 congregants. *For more information, contact Nancy Sheftel-Gomes at [Nsheftelgomes@gmail.com](mailto:Nsheftelgomes@gmail.com).*

The study trip is an extension of our Social Action Committee's efforts to give substance to Sherith Israel's status as a sanctuary congregation. Committee co-chair **Stacy Passman** reports that much of that work has involved supporting people subject to deportation or threatened by ICE activity.

**When the Trump administration threatened mass deportations in July, several Sherith Israel congregants joined a rapid response list.** They agreed to be available by telephone to people in their area. **Seth Kenvin** signed up and did the training because it was a chance to "be more active in social justice work." He adds that he "values Sherith Israel as a community of people who have a shared commitment to social action."

Stacy encourages more congregants to sign up for the rapid response list so we can have a rapid response training at Sherith Israel. She emphasizes that congregants actually can do something to fight the administration's immigration policies.

In this regard, **Lisa Spiegel**, an immigration attorney, prepared a "red card" with advice to immigrant families if ICE appears at their door. The card, in English and Spanish (and other languages), has been widely distributed throughout the Bay Area.

Another of the committee's ongoing projects is accompanying immigrants to deportation hearings. This shows immigration judges that the immigrant has community support. Stacy says that some accompaniments have been successful, others less so. One recent success story involves **René Tomas Lopez**, a transgender person from Guatemala. Community support was so convincing, the government dropped deportation proceedings.

**The committee is also reaching out to congregants who have expressed an interest in being more involved in social action work.** **Natalie Weizman**, CSI's youth program manager, has taken the lead in conducting one-on-one interviews to find out what congregants are interested in doing. "My goal is to listen and form relationships with people," Natalie says. "I'm talking to people who would not otherwise cross paths with me and learning what they are passionate about." She believes the conversations will "galvanize our members to bring new ideas to the committee." ■

## Attacking the stigma of mental illness CSI TO HOST PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Sherith Israel's Chesed Committee is reaching beyond its traditional role of supporting congregants in times of need and joy to help congregants dealing with mental illness. Beginning September 12, the committee hosts a free 12-session program by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) for families of people living with mental illness.

The program grew out of a Shabbat program last May. More than 60 congregants heard NAMI speakers lead a discussion about the prevalence of mental illness and the stigma that makes it hard to seek help.

The NAMI program is a valuable opportunity for family members to talk about their challenges and share stories and advice with peers from NAMI and with other congregants.

*To enroll, contact Mary Lee Gupta, NAMI family services director, at 415.295.2445. For information about the program or the Chesed Committee, contact Janet Parker at 415.282.1495 or [jparkersf@gmail.com](mailto:jparkersf@gmail.com), or Helen Luey at 415.362.2309 or [helenluey8@gmail.com](mailto:helenluey8@gmail.com).*



**TALKING THROUGH THE STIGMA:** Congregants had a chance to share their experiences of living with mental illness or with family members struggling with mental illness at a May 31 program led by the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Pictured are the NAMI team and members of CSI's Chesed Committee, which sponsored the event (L–R): **Jeffrey Golden**, **Anne Fischer** (NAMI executive director), **Janet Parker**, **Shira Shore**, **Helen Luey**, **Greg Zinkl** and **Bonny Llyn**.





# High Holidays

## SHABBAT S'lichot

Friday Sept. 20, 6–8:30 pm

Kabbalat Shabbat service and observance of S'lichot. Prepare for the High Holidays with Rabbi Jessica Graf and Cantor David Frommer. We conclude by dressing our Torahs in their white High Holiday mantles.

## EREV Rosh Hashanah

Sunday, Sept. 29

**5–6 pm: Tot Yontif** for children ages 5 and under and families. Free.

**6 pm: Community dinner**, Newman Hall

✓ *Dinner: Chicken or vegetarian option. Children under 5, free; 5–12 years, \$12; students, \$18; adult members, \$36. Catered by Town's End Restaurant & Bakery. RSVP for dinner by Sept. 27.*

**7:30 pm: Service**

## Rosh Hashanah

Monday, Sept. 30

**10 am: Service**, all ages

**10 am: Youth programs**

**5 and under:** Babysitting next door in Marin Day School (RSVP required).

**Grades K–4:** Youth Rosh Hashanah programs and services, Newman Hall.

**Grades 5 and up:** Join us for services in the sanctuary. Labé Lounge will be open for those who need a break.

**Noon:** All youth rejoin their families in the sanctuary for the conclusion of services.

**1:30 pm: Tashlich and lunch—Crissy Field, West Bluff** Enjoy a complimentary lunch and take part in the ritual of symbolically casting away your sins by tossing pieces of bread into the water. *Catered by Sunrise Deli. High Holiday tickets required for lunch.*

## Cemetery Visit and Book Burial

Sunday, Oct. 6, 10 am–12:30 pm  
Hills of Eternity, Colma

Tour our historic cemetery, take part in our annual book burial and enjoy picnic lunch on the beautiful cemetery grounds.

## KOL NIDRE—Erev Yom Kippur

Tuesday, Oct. 8

**5–6 pm: Tot Yontif** for children ages 5 and under and their families. Free.

**7:30 pm: Service**

## Yom Kippur

Wednesday, Oct. 9

**10 am: Morning service**, all ages

**10 am: Youth programs**

**5 and under:** Babysitting next door in Marin Day School (RSVP required).

**Grades K–4:** Youth Yom Kippur programs and services, Newman Hall.

**Grades 5 and up:** Join us for services in the sanctuary. Labé Lounge open for those who need a break.

**Noon:** All youth rejoin their families in the sanctuary for the conclusion of morning services.

**2–3:30 pm: Afternoon offerings**

**Healing Service** led by Ruth Auerbach and Shira Shore, featuring piano accompaniment by our music director, Jonathan Dimmock.

**Healthy Aging:** Discussion about how to be our best at any age.

**Qigong • Tai Chi Easy** with Rebecca Grossbard. Build strength and vitality, cultivate a calm sense of power and improve your balance, flexibility and agility.

**3:30–5 pm: Afternoon service (Mincha)**

**5–5:45 pm: Yizkor**

**5:45–6:45 pm: Ne'ilah (Closing the Gates) and Havdalah**

**6:50 pm: Break-the-fast** in Newman Hall catered by Max's Deli.

## Sukkot and Simchat Torah

### EREV SUKKOT

Sunday, Oct. 13

**5–7 pm: Sukkah opening party with Argentine Cantor Inés Kapustiansky of Buenos Aires.** Enjoy the music of Cantor Inés Kapustiansky, High Holiday vocalist at Sherith Israel in years past. Spend a few moments in our sukkah, have drinks and dinner, and celebrate the harvest season.

### SHABBAT SUKKOT

Friday, October 18

**5:30 pm: Yizkor**

**6 pm: Kabbalat Shabbat Sukkot**

**7:15 pm: New-member welcome dinner**

New to Sherith Israel this year? Dinner is on us. Everyone welcome.

✓ *Dinner: Dairy or vegan option. Children under 12 and new members, free; students, \$10; adults, \$20.*

**8 pm: Late Minyan** with Cantor David Frommer in the sukkah.

### SIMCHAT TORAH

Sunday, Oct. 20

**11:30 am–12:30 pm: Simchat Torah celebration and service** with Rabbi Abby Phelps.

#### ✓ = REGISTRATION REQUIRED

1. **ONLINE** [sherithisrael.org/highholidays](http://sherithisrael.org/highholidays)
2. **EMAIL** [programs@sherithisrael.org](mailto:programs@sherithisrael.org)
3. **PHONE** 415.346.1720

## Opening the world through reading

### JCL VOLUNTEERS FOSTER LIFELONG LOVE OF LITERACY

You can help a struggling student learn to love reading in just one hour a week. Join other Sherith Israel congregants as a volunteer tutor with the Jewish Coalition for Literacy. JCL tutors work with at-risk students to help them develop the reading skills and self-confidence critical to school achievement and a brighter future.

In the 20 years since JCL's founding, Sherith Israel has become one of its strongest partners, says **Aryeh Fein**, JCL's San Francisco program and administrative manager. "Our tutors are passionate about making a difference in their communities," notes Aryeh. Beyond that, volunteers enjoy meeting other people who share an interest in working to change children's lives.

It works. Roughly ninety percent of students who work with JCL tutors show improvement in five measures of achievement. The tutoring program also benefits the Jewish community by building bridges with the communities it serves.

*The next tutor training and orientation is Tuesday, September 17, 1–4 pm, at the San Francisco JCC.*

*Information: Janet Parker, [jparkersf@gmail.com](mailto:jparkersf@gmail.com) or 415.282.1495.*

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

## BABY NAMING

**Harper Hollander**, daughter of Grace & David Hollander

## B'NAI MITZVAH

**Braydon Backman**, son of Teresa & Joel Backman, August 17

**Binnie Kenvin**, daughter of Mina & Seth Kenvin, August 24

**Asher Weston**, son of Maacah Marah & Stephen Weston, September 7

**Mia Fessel**, daughter of Sarah Mars & Jason Fessel, October 19

**Ayelet Passman-LaPushin**, daughter of Stacy Passman & Dan LaPushin, October 26

**Joachim Gonzalez**, son of Sarah Mandel & Hector Gonzalez, November 2

**Tatum Himelstein**, daughter of Cece Kaufman & Dan Himelstein, November 9

## NEW MEMBERS

**Lauren Allerhand & Sean Dodge**

**Michelle & Christopher Foss and children**

**Brendan & Trevor**

**Elena & Tom Gorman and children**

**Eloise & Rosalind**

**Jessica Hilberman & Kat Reid and child Max Hilberman**  
**Alexandra Morgan**  
**Wendy & Daniel Parker**  
**Terrie Raphael**  
**Goldie Schupak & Edward Gorbis**  
**Michaela Shaw**

## WEDDINGS

**Meghan Marmor & Andrew Arruda**, May 11

**Wendy & Daniel Parker**, May 17

**Stephanie Funt & David Back**, August 18

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

**Nancy Bluestein**, mother of Stephen Bluestein and mother-in-law of Sabrina (Zimmerman) Bluestein

**Benson Cooper**, beloved brother and uncle to his family in Southern California

**Irwin Izenzon**, husband of Ann Goldberg Izenzon; father of Mindy Rosenberg and Jeff Izenzon; father-in-law of Philip Rosenberg and Joanna Izenzon; and grandfather of five

**Doris Sperber**, mother of Stephen, Joel, Fred, and David; mother-in-law of Roberta, Diane, Tina, and Mary; grandmother of eight and great-grandmother of three



**SUSAN SOLOMON, NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT HILLS OF ETERNITY**

Susan serves as ED of all three

Jewish cemeteries in Colma: CSI's Hills of Eternity Memorial Park plus Home of Peace Cemetery and Salem Memorial Park. An attorney, she has held senior management positions in leading religious, legal and financial organizations. Susan relocated from Chicago where she served as executive director of Chicago Sinai Congregation. She is especially proud of her service as a board member and volunteer at Southern California's Care Harbor, a not-for-profit providing medical, dental and vision services to the underinsured.



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**MAZEL TOV!** "The phone has been ringing all summer with couples asking me if I like officiating at weddings," says **Rabbi Jessica Graf**. "The answer is YES! We are delighted to celebrate with newlyweds and engaged couples and to welcome them to Sherith Israel as they begin their lives together." Our summer wedding couples represent a vibrant and diverse group of people. One thing they all have in common, notes Rabbi Graf, is a love of travel—from Montauk to Tuscany, Napa and Fiji. Some even had destination weddings, sadly without the assistance of our CSI clergy. Sigh. We wish all these young couples well as we welcome them to Sherith Israel.

**1 Wendy and Daniel Parker**, Sherith Israel, July 3 **2 Sean Dodge and Lauren Allerhand**, Montauk, September 22 **3 Meghan Marmor and Andrew Arruda**, Tuscany, May 11 **4 David Back and Stephanie Funt**, Presidio, August 18



# MOURNING RITUALS AND HOSPICE VISITS COMFORT ENTIRE CONGREGATION

**Psalms 90:10 declares a life span of 70 years as normal.** Today, living to 90 or 100—or beyond—is well within reach. But life remains finite, and the end of life can bring physical and spiritual pain. Therefore, Jewish tradition has always placed a paramount value on comforting mourners and those on the final leg of their life journey. Sherith Israel is widening the role our community plays in helping at this critical juncture.

It's not just the clergy who are involved. **Rabbi Jessica Graf** emphasizes that every congregant should be aware of the comfort available from our community so no one feels isolated and reminds us that everyone can play a role in providing that comfort.

Rabbi Graf assumes the responsibility of presiding over congregants' funerals. This, she notes, is also a privilege. She gets to learn more about members of our community when she hears their stories and sees the arc of their lives made whole with revelations of joy and sadness. But our traditions involve the entire community. "It's a duty for the congregation to come together and help comfort mourners, enable them to find peace in their loss and recognize the fullness of the lives they remember."

**The greatest mitzvah a Jew can perform is to bury the dead in a dignified way.** The act is selfless, a gift that can't be repaid. But what happens afterward? "Life really doesn't just go on as before," says Rabbi Graf. "Loss hurts. The head understands, but the heart doesn't get it." Helping mourners transition back to "normalcy" represents a significant task for the community. To do this, Jewish tradition provides for several mourning periods: Shiva (the first 7 days), Shloshim (the first 30 days) and the first year, typically ending at 11 months.

Shiva is the most intense, Rabbi Graf points out. Traditionally, mourners detach themselves from the world. They stay home, don't work or cook, cover mirrors to avoid concern with their appearance and sit on hard surfaces. Men don't shave. Visitors wait for mourners to speak first. Conversation, therefore, isn't the key. "Just being present is a great mitzvah," says Rabbi Graf.

The community also plays a key role by taking care of mourners' needs—providing food and assembling a minyan of ten Jewish adults to enable mourners to say Kaddish. "All this helps mourners focus on the seriousness of their loss."

**Shiva minyans provide meaningful experiences to everyone.** Congregants are welcomed and encouraged to attend a Shiva minyan—a brief service during the Shiva period—even when they don't know the mourner. Mourners take comfort in knowing that other congregants care enough to be there and reinforce a sense of community.

A Shiva minyan lasts about thirty minutes. It includes a regular morning, afternoon or evening service using a special *Mishkan T'filah* prayerbook. The prayers are familiar to many congregants. Mourners also speak about their loved ones before saying Kaddish. **Rabbi Graf, Rabbi Abby Phelps** or **Cantor David Frommer** usually leads a Shiva minyan, but any Jew 13 or older may do so.

**In January, CSI will hold a Shiva Lab to acquaint congregants with these practices.** Over three Tuesday nights, rabbis from the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center will take participants through simulated Shiva minyans—including the special prayers *El Malei Rachamim* (God Filled with Mercy) and Kaddish.

"Congregants will better understand the concept and details of the Shiva minyan," Rabbi Graf says. "They will enrich their own experiences as comforters and find new solace as mourners."

**Rabbi Graf also has been learning about end-of-life matters.** She's taken part in the Bay Area Jewish Healing Center's *Kol Haneshama* (Voice of the Soul): Jewish End-of-Life Care Volunteer Training and Program for clergy. *Kol Haneshama* also helps lay people work with those in hospice, particularly at the Campus for Jewish Living (formerly the Jewish Home) on Silver Avenue.

"It's so important to try to take a lot of the darkness out of such a difficult time," says Rabbi Graf. "To help people in hospice maintain their dignity and even a sense of peace at the end of life."



Rabbi Graf is proud of learning how to be more present for someone who is dying. This means not being tied to providing answers, but rather applying skilled listening techniques that enable dying people to share their own experiences. "This can help ease loneliness and a sense of isolation."

During the program, clergy engaged in remembrance rituals—filling a planter box with stones, soil and succulents to let in water, a symbol of life. They also talked about what they wished someone they'd lost could know about their lives now. "This ritual is a great tool for thinking about how people might talk to loved ones no longer alive."

**Rabbi Graf's participation honored the legacy of CSI's late former senior rabbi Larry Raphael.** In retirement, Rabbi Raphael also went through *Kol Haneshama* training and served as a hospice volunteer. "The training Rabbi Raphael received provided great comfort to others and to him at the end of his own life," says Rabbi Graf. Several CSI congregants, including **Helen Luey, Bill Shore** and **Shira Shore**, have taken the program for lay people.

"I've spoken with many mourners," says Rabbi Graf, "and heard outpourings of grief and love—all moving not just through sadness, but the richness and the fullness of lives. Clergy and congregants can all bring comfort to mourners and those at the end of life. It's a very meaningful part of our tradition." ■



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