



Mark Your Calendar!

- Sundays, Dec. 21 & Dec 28
No Sunday School
- Friday, January 2, 6:30 p.m.
Lay led Shabbat service
followed by Potluck dinner
- Sunday, January 4
Sunday School meets
Confirmation meets
12:00-1:30 p.m.
Pizza party/gift exchange
Adult Ed, 10:45 a.m.
- Friday, Jan. 9-Sunday, Jan. 11
Confirmation Retreat
- Friday, January 9
Shabbat 7:45 p.m.
- Sunday, January 11
Men's Club Meeting
- Saturday, January 17
Torah Study, 10:30 a.m.
- Sunday, January 18
Adult Ed, 10:45 a.m.
Sunday School Diversity
Program
- Friday, January 23
Shabbat 7:45 p.m.
- Sunday, January 25
Adult Ed, 10:45 a.m.

All committee members: Please be sure to send updates to your programs to our webmaster Wain Schroeder at niaw1@comcast.net

Rabbi's Message

The voice on the Temple answering machine asked plaintively, "Where are you?" It sounded like an older man, although he left no name and no number. Our phone system reported a phone number, however, and so I called back. I recognized the voice when the man answered and introduced myself as the Rabbi of the Jewish Center. "Where are you?" he asked immediately. "Where are you?" I asked. "Blairstown," he said. "And who are you?" I asked. He told me his name but persisted in demanding, "Where are you?" I told him we were located near the intersection of Rtes. 31 and 57 and asked if he would like to join us for services. "No, thank you," he said: "I just wanted to know where you were."

Some people just want to know that we are here. Perhaps it makes them feel a little less alone. Maybe it is simply nostalgia. For whatever reason, our presence both surprises and reassures them: "You're located where? I didn't know there were any Jews out there!" Yes, we tell them, we are here. But how do we convert that yearning for us into joining us? We have always been a people good at translating seemingly impossible dreams into practical reality. We have a Membership Chairperson who diligently pursues new members. Before the high holy days, another Board member carefully placed ads in selected local newspapers with an eye toward increasing our visibility and encouraging others to join us. The Board itself, with agreement from the congregation, voted to offer free education for children as an incentive for membership.

But in a congregation like ours, membership should not be the province of one or two or ten people. All of you are our best advertisement for membership. Don't be shy. Keep your ears open. Invite your friends to join you for Shabbat dinner and services. Invite total

continued on next page

President's Message

During the end of year holiday season, it is plain to me that people seem to treat each other a little nicer around this time of year. There seem to be more smiles, and people are a little more patient with each other, except for getting a parking spot at the mall. With that in mind, I have been asking myself, what are my obligations in life, as a husband, as a father, as a co-worker, as a friend and as your Temple president?

Have I succeeded this year? What can I do to make next year a better year for those around me?

In terms of my family, I can assist more in the things that are important to each member of the family and give them the time they deserve. As I husband, to cherish my wife and make her feel special. As a worker, to do my best for my clients and to try and do more than they expect of me. As a friend, I want to be there for each of you when you need me, and to be able to lean on you when times are tough. And as Temple president, I would like to be able to lead you in Tikkun Olam, repairing the world. I hope that as a Temple we can give you the opportunities to help make a difference in our Temple and the Jewish community that we live in.

Please look around you and see what impact you can have in the community. We all must do a small part to make the community work.

I love this Temple for the people that I have met here and come to cherish. May 2004 be a wonderful year for all of us, filled with health and happiness.

Shalom
Howie Hirsch

Rabbi's Message, cont.

strangers you meet in the supermarket. When I walked into Trader Joe's in Florham Park recently, I ran into someone who said to me, "Where do I know you from?" I looked at him and said, "I recognize you, too. You come to services on the second day of Rosh Hashanah every year." "Oh, yes," he said, "And we enjoy your services and your congregation." "Then may I ask you why you don't come join us for the rest of the year?" I said. He had his reasons, none of which had to do with us. "Just come," I said.

It's time for us to retire the title of "Best Kept Secret of Warren County." The goal is not for us to become a large congregation but to sustain the synagogue we all love. Where are we? Right where we want to be. But we could use a little help from our friends.

May your candles shine brightly this Chanukah.

Rabbi Ellen J. Lewis

Dear Friends at the Jewish Center,

If you attended the congregational meeting in June 2003, you may remember that I agreed with great reluctance to serve as treasurer—and only because our last treasurer, Andrew Colby, was moving out of state, and I, being head of the nominating committee for the new slate, could find no one who was willing to take on the job. Now, I am delighted to tell you that Paul May has agreed to serve and has been appointed to the position by our president, Howie Hirsch. Paul is no stranger to the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Center, having served as a member-at-large for four years, nor is he, as a successful businessperson, unfamiliar with dollars and sense. He will make an excellent treasurer.

Welcome Paul as a new officer of the board of this Temple. Consult with him about financial and other matters regarding the Center, and send your checks (donations, dues, memorials) to him henceforth at the Temple. Any special payment arrangements that were made for dues still stand and do not need to be reconfirmed or renegotiated until the next billing year (2004-2005).

Thank you all for your confidence in me. I will continue to serve, but in less public ways.

B'shalom,
Sharon Herson
December 9, 2003

Cancellations Due to Weather

Should bad weather be an issue on a Friday evening and services need to be canceled, a message will be left on the Center's answering machine by 5:30 p.m. Should bad weather be an issue on Sunday morning and Sunday School needs to be canceled, a message will be left on the Center's answering machine by 7:30 a.m. We will also use the snow chain.

Thank you

To My Dear Congregants of the Jewish Center,

My husband, Stanley, and I have been members of the Jewish Center for 27 years.

Although, in my heart, I always knew our precious center as a very special place of worship, with very special people, it wasn't until my recent mishap that I experienced such an outpouring of loving kindness (Gemulit Hasadim). I am so grateful and touched by all the caring. My prayers include a wish for our congregation to continue in this wonderful tradition. May we always pay attention to those who need our care. Thank you for all your kindnesses.

Rona Schick

Super Sunday, January 25

Please join our president and his family in showing our support for our community by making our presence felt at Super Sunday for the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren counties on Jan. 25. Teens and adults are encouraged to participate. See the enclosed flyer or Call Howie for more information.

Upcoming Adult Education Programs

Adult Ed. in January

When you pray, do you understand what you are saying? Do you know how the Shabbat liturgy came into being? Study these and other aspects of the Shabbat liturgy with Rabbi Lewis on three Sunday mornings: **January 4, 18, and 25, at 10:45 a.m.** We will use the prayer book as our "text."

Torah Study

As we begin the new secular year of 2004, we are about to enter Exodus, having spent about four years on Genesis. We still have another session or two during which we will be talking about Joseph, and we will surely never leave Genesis entirely, since we always go back and forth. If line-by-line (and sometimes word-by-word) textual study interests you, come join us one Saturday morning per month, 10:30 to noon or thereabouts, on the following dates: **January 17, February 14, March 27, April 24, May 22, and June 12.** If you would like more information, call Sharon Herson.

Education Committee and PTO News

Important Note: Sunday School will meet on **January 4.** The Confirmation Class will meet at noon to discuss the Retreat, then have its pizza party 12:30-1:30 p.m. Bring your gifts!

We are looking for a Sunday School teacher for our K/1 grade beginning next fall. Share with our youngest children the joy of Judaism. This group meets 2-3 times a month. Please contact Lisa Bauch at the Temple if you are interested.

Sunday, January 25 is Mitzvah Day at JCC MetroWest in Whippany. This not-to-be missed event gives our students a chance to spend the morning with other Jewish students and learn about mitzvot opportunities here and in Israel.

A field trip is planned for **Sunday, March 21**, at the Bridgewater JCC 1:00-4:00pm. Sunday School and Confirmation students will be able to swim and use the gym. Cost is \$5 per person. Transportation will be the responsibility of the parents.

Our next meeting is **Sunday, January 18**.

Thanks to the generosity of our Temple community over 40 gifts were donated to the Hunterdon Developmental Center. The Jewish residents received the gifts at their annual Chanukah party on December 17th, a moving celebration of both Chanukah and their Jewish heritage. Thank you for this Mitzvah and for brightening their day!

*Wishing you and yours a Happy Holiday!
Sandy*

Thank you from the Hessels Family

As a continuation of Jordan's Bar Mitzvah Project the Hessels family served lunch at the soup kitchen Christmas day. A big thank you to all for the donated coats.

Give My Regards to Broadway

Want to see a Broadway show at a great discount? The Jewish Center of NorthWest Jersey occasionally receives discount coupons for New York City shows intended for use by students, their parents, and fellow JCNWJ colleagues.

See our website for available shows at www.jcnwj.org/shows/show_list.htm or by clicking on NYC Show Discounts on our website menu. Seating is generally available in Orchestra and Mezzanine, and show days are shown on the discount coupons.

Shoprite/A&P Vouchers

ShopRite and A&P script can be purchased at Sunday School/Confirmation Class on the following dates:

January 4, 18 February 1, 22
March 7, 21 April 4, 18 May 2, 16

Alternatively, please call Sandy Seidorf at the Temple to make arrangements to purchase.

Donations

Yahrzeit donations

Leslie and Murray Heller in memory of Walter Sobine
Ann Stahl in memory of Harriet Horowitz
Daniel and Susan Hirshberg in memory of Mitchell Hirshberg

Simcha leaf

Renee and George Marinich--in honor of Rory's bar mitzvah.

Donations

Renee and George Marinich in honor of Rory's bar mitzvah.
The Bauch Family in honor of Aaron Goldner's bar mitzvah.

From Your Newsletter Editor

We're looking for a new newsletter editor beginning this fall. Be creative, have fun, and help the Temple at the same time! Contact Howie or Lisa if interested.

The deadline for February's issue will be January 18.

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Jewish Life

 Jewish LIFE in conjunction with St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Bridgewater is pleased to present Bishop John Shelby Spong, "Reading the Gospel with Jewish Eyes," Sunday, January 11 at 4 p.m. The pre-eminent voice for liberal Christianity, Spong was the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark for 24 years before his retirement in 2000. He is considered a champion of an inclusive faith by many, both inside and outside the Christian church.

Also in January is Rabbi Niles Goldstein, "Finding Hope in the Heart of Darkness" on Thursday, January 22 at 7:30 p.m. Stephen Steinlight discusses "Open Immigration, the Rise of Islamism in America and the Impact on American Jewry," on Sunday, February 8 at 10 a.m.

Programs are at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 775 Talamini Road in Bridgewater unless otherwise noted. To register or for further information, contact Laura Friedman, Assistant Executive Director, at 908-725-6994 x213 or e-mail LFriedman@ssbjcc.org.

Shabbaton Sign-Up Information Distributed

Registration information for the February 28th Regional Shabbaton at Temple Beth El in Hillsborough is being widely distributed throughout the region. This all-day program of worship and study has been an increasingly popular regional event, and a large number of participants is expected.

A highlight this year will be the D'var Torah offered at Shabbat morning services by Dr. Norman Cohen, Provost of the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). Dr. Cohen is also a Professor of Midrash at HUC-JIR, New York.

The day will begin with Torah study prior to the morning service. After lunch following services, a series of workshops will be presented by leading regional scholars. A havdalah service will conclude the day's program at about 5 PM. For information call 888-750-8242.

Outreach at 25

In celebration of the 25th anniversary of Outreach, the Union for Reform Judaism has sent every congregation a poster featuring nine photos displaying the diversity of the Movement today. Where do you fit on the poster? (See www.urj.org/outreach/25/faceofrj.shtml for more information).

Outreach was born December 2, 1978, when Rabbi Alexander Schindler revolutionized American Judaism with his controversial Outreach Initiative. Calling for synagogues to welcome non-Jewish spouses of interfaith marriages and encourage them to choose Judaism for their families, the initiative reversed a 500-year-old tradition of discouraging converts and helped welcome thousands of interfaith and non-practicing families into Judaism.

This initiative dramatically changed the face of North American Judaism and congregations everywhere, bringing new strength and vitality to our Movement.

Hineini

During his sermon at the Minnesota Biennial, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, called on Reform congregations to help support Reform Jewish life in Israel and the former Soviet Union.

"Reform Jews are ready: ready for a single vision and a shared future; ready to advance the cause of Israel and our people; ready to affirm the unity of the Jewish people across time and space," he said. With these words, the Hineini Initiative was launched, and congregations are now signing up to "adopt" a Reform/Progressive congregation in Israel or Eastern Europe, sponsor Reform rabbis at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem, or help build Israeli Progressive synagogues.

The goal is for every household to contribute \$18 a year to support Jewish life elsewhere. Details: www.urj.org/hineini.

Tu BiShevat

What better time to celebrate the rebirth of the earth than the dead of winter?

This February 7 is Tu BiShevat, originally the day when taxes on fruit trees were collected, but now an ecological celebration, a time to celebrate the earth and to educate ourselves on how we can take better care of our planet.

Celebrate Tu BiShevat with your family with the activities, recipes, and other ideas prepared by the Union for Reform Judaism that can be found at www.urj.org/educate/parent.

Calling all Bikers

This March 21-25, the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism is sponsoring its first annual bike ride in Israel - a five-day, 220-mile trek from Nahariya, Israel's northernmost seashore town, to Jerusalem. "Riding4Reform" will take participants through many of Israel's vibrant Reform communities, including Carmiel, where a new Reform congregation is reaching out to Argentinean olim; Tel Aviv, home of Beit Daniel Congregation, and the new city of Modi'in, where Congregation Yozma continues to grow, before ending at Beit Shmuel-Mercuz Shimshon in Jerusalem, the center of the worldwide Progressive Movement.

Riders are welcome-but you can also participate by adopting a rider, thus helping raise funds for the educational programs in Israel. For more information, visit the Web site at www.riding4reform.org, or contacting the IMPJ at riding4reform@impj.org.il.

Words of Healing

New from the UAHC Press and the Women of Reform Judaism, *The Mitzvah of Healing* is a collection of essays, traditional texts, personal stories, and meditations that look at healing from a Jewish perspective. Addressing difficult questions such as how to nourish the soul while the body is aching and how to help heal those who are suffering, the book exposes you to the breadth of Jewish healing. To order, see www.uahcpress.com, or contact the Press toll-free at 888.489.8242, Press@urj.org.

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