

# *B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation*

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NISSAN/IYAR 5781

***B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation is a Brit Olam Congregation in covenant with the world – because we seek the world we want, not the world as it is.***

## **JOIN US FOR PRAYER, GOOD DEEDS, CELEBRATION AND STUDY**

Zoom links for services are sent out weekly.

Please call the office for information about telephone access to prayer services.

Friday, April 2	<b>PASSOVER KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b> WITH SPECIAL PASSOVER PRAYERS	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, April 3	Seventh Day of Passover - NO TORAH STUDY YIZKOR – “Sharing Memories” with songs, prayers & stories	10:00 AM
Friday, April 9	<b>TOT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>
	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, April 10	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, April 16	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM**</b>
Saturday, April 17	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, April 23	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM**</b>
Saturday, April 24	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, April 30	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM**</b>
Saturday, May 1	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM
Friday, May 7	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, May	TORAH STUDY WITH RABBI KATZ LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	9:00-9:45 AM* 10:00 AM

*\*Unless otherwise noted in the weekly announcements.*

*\*\*New start time.*

Visit <https://reformjudaism.org/learning> for each week's parashah.

***B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation, a Reform Jewish synagogue, is a community that fosters individual, family and congregational spirituality by engaging in worship and prayer, promoting learning on all levels, supporting each other's needs, bettering our community and our world, and forging connections with worldwide Jewry.***

***We take pride in being warm, welcoming, informal, progressive, open-minded, diverse, and participatory.***

***We strive to create a vibrant Jewish present, linking our ancient traditions with the promise of the future***

## ***From Our Rabbi...***

Dear B'nai Sholom Member,

I am so pleased that B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation has voted to accept the recommendation of the Board to invite Rabbi-To-Be Danielle Weisbrot to become its Rabbi. Rabbi Weisbrot will bring to the congregation a steady hand, a deep well of knowledge, a good heart and a straightforwardness that will be constantly reassuring. Together you will create a partnership that, God willing, shall last many years.

Rabbi Weisbrot will need your help along the way. To be a true partner with a Rabbi is to share responsibility for the goals our tradition puts forward. If Rabbi Weisbrot's priority is to create a congregation that more forcefully expresses the value of learning and she calls upon you to attend Shabbat morning study, you should be there. If her goal is to create a more vibrant style of prayer and she asks you to come to services more regularly and learn new melodies, it is important for you to make your attendance and openness a personal goal. If you receive a call from her or from the head of a committee to help the Temple in its efforts to "repair the world," you should not hesitate. Rabbi Weisbrot will be there for you at the most important moments of your life. She will teach and guide you. For the Temple to thrive there must be a sacred partnership. I know you will step forward.

Now is hardly the time to reflect upon my experience at B'nai Sholom, nor are words of gratitude, expressions of appreciation or inspiring charges to action in order. Fully a third of my tenure remains before I leave and there is a great deal of work to be done. Preparing staff and lay leaders to welcome a new Rabbi successfully, analyzing the data gathered by the "Moments" initiative and beginning its implementation, strengthening committees, along with teaching, counseling and conducting services are responsibilities that continue. So the language of "farewell and good luck" is premature.

Even so, let the moment be marked. The Temple has taken its first step into the future. How exciting! Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot will become part of the B'nai Sholom family this summer and there is reason to celebrate.

May blessings be upon you all.

L'shalom,

Rabbi David Katz

## ***A Special Invitation from the Rabbi***

There were people we loved who had an enormous influence on our lives. It may have been their confidence in us that set us on our way. It might have been watching them light candles on Friday night or holding up a cup of wine - images to cherish. Or perhaps it was an embrace that was more than a hug, a smile that lighted the room and went straight to our hearts.

Yizkor occurs on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Passover - this year on Saturday, April 3. At 10 a.m. we will meet on Zoom to share our memories of those we loved. What were we taught? How are we different because they were part of our lives? What did they say or do that remains alive? The root of the word "yizkor" (*zayin, chaf, reish*) means "remember" and that is primarily what we will do in our hour together. El Malei Rachamim, Esa Einai, the Kaddish are the prayers we will recite, and I will speak about the gift of memory.

Observing a Yahrzeit is primarily a ritual for remembering parents, but Yizkor is a time to remember everyone who was important to us - aunts, uncles, grandparents, Jews and gentiles, friends and even figures from history.

So let us gather on Shabbat morning, the seventh day of Passover, April 3, at 10 a.m. in order to remember.

See you then,

Rabbi Katz

## **New Shabbat Service Start Times: You Spoke. We Listened.**

You spoke up about the 6:13 start time for Shabbat services. And we listened. While some congregants preferred the early hour, others missed the 8:00 service or wanted something in-between.

So beginning April 2, the first two Friday services of the month will continue to begin at 6:13 p.m.; the remaining Friday services of the month will now start at 7:30 p.m.

Be sure to note these new start times. Of course, it will be nice to see you whenever you come!

## **Update on Re-Opening**

The Re-Opening Task Force will be scheduling a meeting in the coming weeks to develop safety procedures and move toward holding in-person services and other events. Stay tuned for further details and updates.

## ***From Our President...***

This month's Bulletin arrives in the period between Passover and Shavuot, when observant Jews count the Omer. In our holiday cycle, these days mark our transition from the escape from slavery and our bare life of freedom in the trackless desert to the moment of lawgiving at Sinai that constituted us as a people.

As someone who studies and teaches about constitutional law, I am intrigued by this transition. Like the Israelites, in American history "we the people" did not move immediately from freedom to a sustainable constitutional order. During the Revolutionary Era, the United States achieved independence from Great Britain, but independence generated conflicts over sovereignty and order. The unity finally embodied through the implementation of the Constitution in 1789 was difficult to reach, required deep compromises and came at great moral cost. The main accomplishment of a successful constitutional moment is to look ahead, building a broad commitment to a shared set of values and practices that can bind a people together to build a collective future.

As a congregation over the last year, we too have been through something of a revolution. Unlike the Israelites and the rebellious American colonists, we did not flee from or overthrow our former regime. Rather, we said a fond and sorrowful farewell after 35 years of superb stewardship (and felt even more saddened by having to scale back our plans for that farewell). Still, we entered a period of unprecedented disruption and change that amplified our break with the past. And as we continue to wander through the desert, while we can see our crowning transformative moment ahead looming like Sinai, we aren't there yet.

My students, who are generally political science majors, sometimes get frustrated when I assign the Articles of Confederation and spend some time discussing the period between the Declaration of Independence and the writing of the Constitution. What's the point of learning about a superseded governmental structure that even many people at the time recognized would not be sustainable for the long run? I encourage them to consider how the issues and struggles encountered during this period shaped the constitutional moment both by opening up possibilities and foreclosing them. Remembering and honoring this brief period in history helps to give them a much better fix on why certain decisions were made, and why some worked out and others didn't.

Thrust as we were into the harsh and frightening environment of the pandemic, much as the Israelites were into the desert and the American colonists into a revolution, we have struggled to adapt and to build the structures that would carry us through. We too are eagerly anticipating a more stable time and the re-establishment of a firm foundation for us to grow and flourish as a congregation (if not precisely as a people or a nation!). But we may wish to take this moment and savor our sojourn in the desert.

While the Sinai of reopening and a new era in our congregation's history beckon, there is sweetness in this moment. Rabbi Katz's superb leadership has taught us that we can accommodate change and that change can be both healthy and refreshing. We have learned new ways of meeting each other together from our homes and have found that joyous events

*(Continued on page 5.)*

*(Continued from page 4.)*

can happen remotely. While the ways we interact have changed and some of our practices have changed, our identity as a warm, welcoming, creative and invested community has remained our guiding North Star. We have become both more comfortable and more confident with innovation. When the time comes to make all sorts of big and small decisions about what we want our future to look like, we'll be ready – far more ready than we would have been a year ago.

I have encouraged us before to think about what we want to bring with us when we leave the desert. Three insights resonate particularly with me. One is that we can accommodate change gracefully. We are prepared to experiment generously, leaving room for both successes and failures. It is much easier to handle change and experimentation when we know that failure is just an opportunity to learn and grow.

The second is practical. We have learned a lot about using digital platforms and resources. This opens up new opportunities for us. If a committee has identified the perfect facilitator for an event but she's in California, that is fine! We can learn how to cook new things together, but while working in the comfort and familiarity of our own kitchens. And who, a year ago, could have imagined hosting a special guest from Israel at a Torah study session without months of planning and possibly ruinous expenses?

Finally, we have learned a lot about accessibility. Our new format for services and events has made it much easier for some of our members to attend and participate. We have also become much more conscious of ways to lower the barriers to participation. While we don't know what the new normal will look like once vaccination is widespread, we do know that we need to think about our vulnerable members and how we can make our services and events available in safe and convenient ways.

I hope the Bulletin is reaching you in a moment of anticipation and hope and not just before or after we've had to clear our driveways and paths after a spring snowstorm. Even if that is the case, let's keep our eyes on Sinai, but take the time to observe and embrace the beauty of the desert.

L'shalom,

Julie Novkov

## **Come Outdoors with B'nai Sholom!**

Do you find your spirituality in nature? Join us for one or more hour-long programs of sharing prayers and personal reflections, combined with walking or snowshoeing, at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar. Weather permitting, our next program will take place at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 25. Social distancing, masks and limits on group size will all be employed to ensure the safety of participants. Registration is required at least one day in advance so we can limit numbers if necessary and communicate regarding safety protocols and weather accommodations. Register by calling Libby Liebschutz at 518-466-7034 or emailing her at [libbyliebschutz@gmail.com](mailto:libbyliebschutz@gmail.com).

# News from the Social Action/Social Justice Committee

## SUNDAY, APRIL 25, IS COLLECTION DAY

**10 AM – 2 PM**

*Please do not bring donations at any other time*

### It's Time to Clean Out Your Closets!

Once again we are collecting spring and summer clothing for donation to those in need in our region. We will collect CLEAN, GENTLY USED clothes and shoes.



Please be sure to SORT TWICE: BY GENDER (male/female/unisex)

AND ALSO BY AGE (infant/child/teen/adult). **Be sure to label your bags according to size and gender.**

We will collect your donations outside at the synagogue on Sunday, April 25, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### And We Will Collect Books, Too!



We are partnering with the RED Bookshelf whose mission is to inspire children to read. Their vision is for each child in Albany to have the opportunity to own books because having books in their home equips them with the tools for better literacy achievement.

We will collect GENTLY USED and NEW books for all ages.

You may also bring NEW baby board books for our Books for Babies program. The RED Bookshelf will be partnering with us to distribute our gift bags to families with new babies.

### We Have a Site for Riversweep!

For a second year, B'nai Sholom will participate in a Riversweep cleanup along the Hudson River. This year, we are also working with the City of Albany and I Love My Park clean-up days. This is a wonderful opportunity to get outside and discover a pocket park along one of the most significant natural features in our region and is a great outing for the entire family. Masks and other health protocols will be observed.

When: Sunday, May 2, time to be determined

Where: Church Street Park, Port of Albany at Church and Broadway.

PLEASE CONTACT BARRY PENDERGRASS TO REGISTER so he can let you know the time as soon as he is informed by the City of Albany:

[bpenderg37@gmail.com](mailto:bpenderg37@gmail.com) or 518-489-4558

## Ritual Committee: Town Hall Informative, Purim Fun for All

Thank you to all who attended the B'nai Sholom Town Hall Meeting, sponsored by the Board and hosted by the Ritual Committee. Special thanks to Rabbi Katz for moderating a discussion that reflected a variety of congregant preferences for service length and start time and a common theme of appreciation for this year's Zoom service content. Thanks also to Joseph DeFronzo for taking notes. The Ritual Committee, with Rabbi Katz, is reviewing the recommendations, which include preferences for more English or more Hebrew in the service, silent meditation and use of varied content in the prayer book. The Town Hall experience introduced ideas we might try now – like the new trial of start times just announced – and some we might wait to discuss with the new Rabbi.

And then along came Purim. Many thanks to the Megillah readers (who were cast through Deb Adler and Linda Finkle): Valerie Tabak, Rondi Brower, Leah Cherry, Rebecca Pendergrass, Liz Davis, Julie Friedman, Ethan Goldberg, Rabbi Katz and Mini Me. And special cheers to the creative team and cast of The Shushan Shutdown Show!: Martie and Phil Teumim, Judy and Roy Fruiterman, Cheryl Reeder, Libby and David Liebschutz, Becky and Ben Marvin, Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass, Liz Davis, Melissa Putterman Hoffmann and our Technician Extraordinaire: Julie Friedman. It was hard to know who had more fun - performers or audience.

What's next? Though many Passover celebrations will rely on Zoom and other platforms, the Member Events and Ritual committees are collaborating on matching guest and host families for Seder.

### **AUDACIOUS HOSPITALITY**

#### A NEW INITIATIVE

The Audacious Hospitality Initiative from the Union for Reform Judaism is a focused effort on Racial Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (REDI) work, which provides resources that guide congregations through a process of self-examination resulting in setting goals with follow-up actions that help the congregation to become the diverse and inclusive community that it aspires to be.

- The work is led by a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Working Group facilitator and a co-facilitator who are responsible for the project's implementation.
- A DEI Working Group is formed consisting of a representational body of the congregational family. Race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, differing abilities are taken into account.
- Over a period of several months, the Working Group meets and ultimately conducts the Audacious Hospitality self-evaluation.
- Results from the meetings and completed self-assessment become the Working Group's recommended **goals**.
- Generally, the **goals** are implemented by various levels of staff/clergy/trustees/members and committee members. A variety of "voices" should be represented.

With a new settled Rabbi joining us this summer, it is an obvious time for new beginnings. This initiative will be an important step in furthering our goals of becoming an even more inclusive congregation.

# Spotlight on Our Newest Members

*Editor's note: A new feature from the Membership Committee that we plan to include in the Bulletin from time to time to help all congregants get to know our new members.*

## **Hayden Schwartz**

Hayden grew up in the Capital Region, but has lived elsewhere, including Toronto and, most recently, Brooklyn, for the last 11 years. He returned to this area last September and is now starting a new job as a respite aide for a young special needs family member. Previously he has worked in the music, nightlife and education industries, and he is also a photographer by trade. In his spare time, he enjoys working out, being with his dog and two cats, spending time with friends and family and watching movies.



When he was younger, Hayden attended several bar/bat mitzvah services of friends at B'nai Sholom. He says, "I was always admiring of how intimate and small and community-oriented the synagogue appeared to be." As an adult, he was also attracted to the social action/social justice involvement of the B'nai Sholom congregation. He is especially interested in becoming more involved with social justice projects and actions around the Capital Region and feels that going through B'nai Sholom is a great way to accomplish that. Hayden is particularly interested in activism relating to hunger and food insecurity, racial justice and equity, LGBTQ rights and housing. Naturally, he has joined the Social Action Committee.

Says Hayden, "My main goal as a new member of B'nai Sholom is to build my own sense of community in an area that is not new to me as a person but is new to me as an adult."

## **April Kibbutzniks**

Steven Morse, Brenda Hazard and Family - In memory of Dr. Jerome Morse

Gary and Melissa Putterman Hoffmann - In honor of Jillian's graduation

Joseph, Susan and Stephanie - In loving memory of Leonarda DeFronzo

## **Landscape Committee (Landcomm) News**

Beginning in April, the Landcomm will be renovating the landscape at B'nai Sholom, removing some plants, shrubs and trees and replacing them with native plants. This will create better safety and security and add beauty and sustainability to the Temple landscape.

Stay tuned! We will need your help in the spring.



## **The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:**

### **General Fund**

In memory of **Muriel Rosenthal** by Barney Horowitz

In memory of **Muriel Rosenthal** by Ellie and Randy Davis

In memory of **Muriel Rosenthal** by Rondi Brower and Philip Gilly

In memory of **Rhoda Green** by Ellie and Randy Davis

In memory of **Judy Reeder** by Mark and Cheryl Reeder

In memory of **Caleb Reeder** by Mark and Cheryl Reeder

In memory of **Richard Propp** by Lew Sperber

In appreciation of **Gail Volk** by Lew Sperber

In honor of **my daughter-in-law Libby Liebschutz, her recent birthday and her active commitment to B'nai Sholom over many years** by Sarah F. Liebschutz.

## **The following Yahrzeits will be observed in April:**

4/2 Sara Steinhart; Harold Lazoroff\*; Irma Schwartzman\*; Helen Goody; Lillian Gaes Schwadron\*; Michael DeFronzo; Caleb Reeder; Elizabeth Stedman Tuck; Milton Farkas

4/9 Rebecca Miller Shultz; Gerald Minzer; Dorothy Hess\*; Hazel Propp Sohmer; Fanny Engler\*; Jacob Hammer\*; Sheldon Bosin; Mota Teumim; Rachel Abrams\*; Goldie Goldstein; Muriel Cohen; Edward Blumenthal; Anna Raderman

4/16 David Fiks; Larry Propp; Judy Reeder; Richard Propp\*; Rhoda Green; Aaron Harold Rosner; Bernard Earl Shanks; Moses Khazam

4/23 J. Milton Steinhardt\*; Sara Rockovitz Propp\*; Manuel Aronson\*; Anne Smuckler Paktor; Joseph Ottenheimer; Betty Atschuler Gottlieb; Eleanor Zaremsky; Sidney Devore; William Lacov; Lena Wolf\*

4/30 Lieselotte Weiner; Cecelia Zimmelman\*; Fay Levinn; George Rudinger; Hyman Ikler; Sophie Goldstein\*; Gertrude Sperber\*

## **MAZAL TOV!**

.....To Emily McCabe, who recently completed her graduate school studies at the University at Albany, receiving a master's degree in public history and a master's degree in information science.

.....To Josh Brody, who began his new job as Trust Counsel to NYSARC, working with NYSARC Trust Services.

## **THANK YOU TO...**

.....the Bulletin Brigade – Steve Abelman, Jim Savitt, Joan Savitt, Rema Goldstein, Anita Stein, Barbara Devore and Anne Hausgaard – who helped fold and stuff the March Bulletin.

## An Easy Way to Help B'nai Sholom and Save on Taxes

The Finance Committee would like to advise congregants who are age 72 or older that now is the perfect time to arrange for direct payments from their retirement accounts to B'nai Sholom to cover their 2021 regular and patron dues payments. This portion of their RMD (required minimum distribution) will not be subject to tax! Talk with your tax or financial adviser for details on whether and how you can take advantage of this benefit.

## Jewish Federation of NENY Community Calendar Now on Weekly E-announcements

We offer many ways to stay informed of events going on at B'nai Sholom. But what about in the greater Capital Region Jewish community?

The Weekly E-announcements now carries a link to the comprehensive Community Calendar maintained by our friends at the Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York. Look for it at the bottom of each week's edition.

**RABBI:** David Katz can be reached at [rabbidavidkatz18@gmail.com](mailto:rabbidavidkatz18@gmail.com)

**RABBI EMERITUS:** Donald P. Cashman

**PRESIDENT:** Julie Novkov can be reached at [julienovkov@hotmail.com](mailto:julienovkov@hotmail.com)

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**BOOKKEEPER:** Jean Dashnaw can be reached at [bookbnaisholom@gmail.com](mailto:bookbnaisholom@gmail.com)

**OFFICE HOURS:** TUE/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM–3:30 PM

Articles and news received after the deadline are subject to omission.

As a rule, the Bulletin deadline is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month. Adherence to the deadline is critical to ensuring that the Bulletin is sent out in a timely manner.

<u>Period Covered</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
May.....	April 14
June.....	May 12