

# *B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation*

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TAMMUZ/AV 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, July 2	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, July 3	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, July 9	<b>TOT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>5:00 PM</b>
	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, July 10	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, July 16	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>
Saturday, July 17	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, July 23	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>
Saturday, July 24	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, July 30	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>
Saturday, July 31	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM
Friday, August 6	<b>KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE</b>	<b>6:13 PM</b>
Saturday, August 7	LAY-LED TORAH STUDY	10:00 AM

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.***

## **WELCOME TO RABBI DANIELLE WEISBROT!!**



### **FROM THE LANDCOMM (LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE)**

**Seth Edelman, Bob Negriz, Barry Pendergrass, Paula Philo,  
Cheryl and Mark Reeder, Mari Vosburgh, Martie Teumim**

We look forward to Rabbi Weisbrot and heartily welcome her on our journey as a community of life-long learners.

***From the Adult Ed Committee***

The Reopening Task Force welcomes Rabbi Weisbrot to B'nai Sholom! We look forward to working with you closely on all phases of the reopening process.

***From the Reopening Task Force***

A rabbi is many things: spiritual leader, teacher, guide, ethical compass – and communicator. We welcome Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot to B'nai Sholom and look forward to working closely with our new singing, baking, teaching and praying communicator!

***From the Communications Committee***

The Fundraising Committee welcomes our new Rabbi, Danielle Weisbrot, and looks forward to working with her in the coming months!

***From the Fundraising Committee***

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

As I reflect on my first year serving as your President, the primary emotion I feel is gratitude. It has been quite a year for B'nai Sholom, going back to early last summer, when we held our 2020 annual meeting. We were preparing to bid farewell to Rabbi Cashman after experiencing the last months of his rabbinic leadership on Zoom due to the pandemic. While we had adjusted to gathering virtually and doing most things online, we had to set aside two joyous community gatherings: our celebration of Rabbi Cashman's tenure, and our biennial Goods and Services Auction. As we met on Zoom for the annual meeting, we faced the challenges of welcoming a new interim Rabbi and the uncertainty of how and in what format to conduct our High Holiday services.

The meeting required a lot of planning behind the scenes. Was our Zoom account adequate to handle it? How would we make sure people had access? What would we do about those who had to phone in? How would we manage voting? A crack team of board members came together and worked out answers to all of these questions, and we proceeded successfully, setting the tone for the year. Repeatedly, we would grapple with difficult problems and collaborate to come up with thoughtful solutions.

We are all grateful to Rabbi Katz, who led us gracefully through a year of change, encouraging us always to think about what kind of congregation we are and what kind of congregation we want to be. He and the Ritual Committee, masterfully led by Melissa Putterman Hoffmann, navigated difficult questions about how to create services that would enable us to experience our holidays in an immersive way from home. The wise early decision to keep the experience almost entirely virtual freed space for creative and meaningful programming. Rabbi Katz would go on to create many new experiences for us that both brought observance into our homes virtually and enabled congregants to open their own home practices with candles, challah and song to the congregation.

Anyone who spent a Friday attending a Tot Shabbat service likely felt the same sense of gratitude that I experienced. The beautiful children's faces as they sang or listened raptly to a story showed their resilience and ability to find the joy in the moment, without mourning what was missing. Libby Liebschutz's dedication to continuing these services brought something very special into the lives of all who experienced them. Many of us also kvelled along with Maxine and Eric Goldberg as Ethan observed his bar mitzvah, a wonderful experience that highlighted how much a virtual event can reinforce and celebrate community.

Through the year, the Board of Trustees has continued to meet virtually. Members have generously donated their time and energy to confront and consider a big range of issues. I am particularly grateful that we have a board where people feel comfortable both disagreeing with each other and sometimes allowing themselves to be persuaded during a discussion to change their positions. While we don't agree on every issue, every member of the board comes to difficult issues from the perspective of wanting what is best for the congregation, and every member brings to these conversations a willingness to hear what others are saying. As someone who's been a member of many organizations, I can say that this is both rare and valuable.

Our congregation may be small, but I am grateful that we have a big voice that speaks for justice and equity. As the nation struggled to come to terms with its legacy of racism, we

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condemned state violence against African Americans and advocated for racial justice. Members of our congregation continued the fight for bail and parole reform, voting access, health care and health insurance reform, sensible gun regulation, reproductive freedom and stronger environmental protection policies. Members also did the work on the ground to help local residents struggling with poverty and homelessness, to clean up our environment and to strengthen ties with other local community- and religious-based organizations.

Many of us found our long, empty days in quarantine enriched by the educational opportunities that B'nai Sholom provided. Virtual formats enabled us to host speakers from beyond our local circles, and Rabbi Katz participated enthusiastically from his areas of expertise. We learned broadly, ranging from the Dead Sea Scrolls to new cooking tips and tricks and beyond (including learning a lot more about herring!). And we gathered in more informal schmooze sessions online. We have also found that we have capacity and interest to sustain not just one, but two, weekly Torah study groups.

While almost everything up until now has been virtual, some of us have been grateful to enjoy the outdoors together in a spiritual way, braving the cold to gather at Five Rivers. Our Reopening Task Force has grappled thoughtfully with shifting guidance from CDC and the state, developing guidelines for events that will soon enable us to gather safely in other settings. The task force and Ritual Committee have collaborated in a series of experiments to think through how we can return to the building for services, and these informed, thoughtful conversations will continue through the summer. I am exceptionally proud and grateful to report that no COVID-19 cases have ever been traced to any events hosted by B'nai Sholom.

I'm grateful too that we have a professional and dedicated communications team. Ben Marvin and his crew do a great job of making sure that we always know what is going on at B'nai Sholom, but also that B'nai Sholom is visible and presented in a positive light throughout the region. Our Building and Landscaping committees have helped to maintain and improve our physical space, even when it has not experienced much traffic. Almost everyone already knows that Christine Blackman, our office manager, is an invaluable resource across multiple dimensions. And our Finance Committee has worked hard to develop better financial practices while keeping us safely in the black in economic terms.

My personal gratitude does not blind me to the reality that this has been an exceptionally difficult year for many. Too many of us have lost friends and family members to COVID-19, but cancer, Alzheimer's disease, heart disease, diabetes and other illnesses have continued to cause grief and pain. Some have experienced devastating economic and personal losses as well. Through these struggles, members of our Caring Community have provided support across spiritual, emotional and concrete physical dimensions.

Finally, I am grateful to be able to look forward optimistically to the future. The Moments Task Force has assembled a remarkable snapshot of the variety of interests and connections we bring to B'nai Sholom, and committees have already begun to tap into this amazing resource. Our Transition Committee has masterfully managed and continues to manage all of the changes that we are currently experiencing. And of course, we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Rabbinic Search Committee, co-chaired by David Liebschutz, Carol Smith and Ann Lowenfels. While I'm not the most mystical person, it's hard to look at

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this process and not believe at least a little bit in the idea of *bashert*. We and Rabbi Weisbrot managed to find each other at exactly the right time, and I look forward to helping B'nai Sholom to flourish under her leadership.

I note that this is by no means a comprehensive list of everything that has been happening at B'nai Sholom for the last year, nor have I called out everyone who has contributed. Perhaps, though, it is a testament to who we are that a full reckoning would stretch to include a strong majority of our membership. We may be small in numbers, but our energy and engagement give us a distinctive and powerful identity. I can't wait to see what we accomplish next!

B'shalom,

Julie Novkov

## Update from the Reopening Task Force

Great news! As you know, the Governor lifted all NYS mandated COVID-19 restrictions on Tuesday--except for the mask requirement for unvaccinated individuals and in certain settings (including schools). As we move towards in-person activities at BSRC, we will follow these guidelines: Although we will not be checking vaccination records, **unvaccinated individuals are required to wear a mask indoors; vaccinated individuals are always welcome to wear a mask if they choose**. When the Reopening Task Force met on Wednesday, they developed the following reopening timeline for B'nai Sholom:

- **Shabbat Service on June 18:** Congregants will continue to participate via zoom, except for members of the Board of Trustees and the Ritual Committee. This will give us a chance to finalize arrangements for conducting hybrid services (live-streamed and in person at the same time).
- **Shabbat Service on June 25:** Congregants are welcome to participate in-person, which will help us practice the hybrid model with a larger group.
- **Shabbat Service on July 2:** All are encouraged to join us for the **Grand Re-opening of B'nai Sholom, featuring Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot!** If you would like to assist or host an oneg as we resume in person services, please contact a member of the hospitality committee.
- **Starting immediately:** All restrictions on outdoor activities are lifted.
- **Upcoming:** Committee Chairs are invited to an upcoming staff meeting to discuss further reopening considerations and steps (date TBD).

If you have questions or concerns about this communication, please contact a member of the reopening task force. Thank you for your patience throughout this ordeal!

# Reflections of a Search Committee Co-Chair

By David Liebschutz

With the start of the engagement of our new settled rabbi, Rabbi Danielle Weisbrot, on July 1, our formal search process has ended. While there will be transition items for several months as we integrate Rabbi Weisbrot into our community and finally give a formal sendoff to Rabbi Emeritus Cashman, my work as search committee co-chair is over.

When then-synagogue president Barbara Devore approached me in the fall of 2018 to co-lead the effort to find a successor to Rabbi Cashman, who had announced his intention to retire in June 2020, I thought it would be a good thing for me to be involved in. I had been a temple president. I taught leadership classes at UAlbany and Siena. I consulted on organizational transitions and coached leaders. How hard could this effort be?

Yet, as I look back on the last two-and-a-half years, I realize just how challenging this effort was and how, without the great partnership of my two co-chairs, Ann Lowenfels and Carol Smith, and the work of our Search Committee and board, I would have been up the proverbial creek without a paddle. While the theory of leadership is one thing, conducting a search, especially during a pandemic and at a challenging time for our synagogue and for Reform Judaism, was quite another!

While we hope that Rabbi Weisbrot's tenure with us will be fruitful for both her and for our community, that chapter is still to be written. However, the search process itself was a testament to the strength of our synagogue and will position us, I think, for a successful future.

So, what are the big takeaways for me from the past couple of years?

First, it takes a village to do a successful search. While not everyone on the committee or the board agreed with every decision that was made regarding the process, in every case once the decision was made, the committee and then the board coalesced around the decision and moved forward. Case in point was the decision to hire an interim rabbi. Some members of the committee thought that it would prolong the search (it did) and that we already knew what we needed in a new settled rabbi (we didn't). The time we took to think about life with a new rabbi, including conducting community conversations and a congregational survey, allowed us to really reflect on who we are and what we wanted/needed in a new rabbi.

Second, if it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger. When both of our initial candidates for the interim slot backed out, the second one four hours before a congregational meeting to vote on his contract, some congregants may have thought that we had made a bad decision and should pivot to another course of action. While I had my own inner doubts about the success of this course of action, I held firm, and with the support of the committee and the board we continued to seek an interim rabbi. Lo and behold, Rabbi David Katz fell into our laps, and even though we had to conduct the search by Zoom, it was a great match for us and allowed us to have a year to "breathe" between settled rabbis. Ironically, having to do the search for Rabbi Katz by Zoom prepared us for having to do all the searching for a settled rabbi by Zoom some nine months later.

Finally, communication begets confidence. As noted above, one of the interim candidates backed out shortly before a congregational meeting to vote on his contract. We nevertheless went ahead with the meeting and shared our vision of the process going forward with nearly 100

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people attending (the last congregational in-person meeting we've had). This open communication about the process and then the candidates allowed the congregation to know what we were doing and why we were doing it and prevented some of the challenges that many synagogues go through in a big transition, such as the one we faced. Several congregations have subsequently reached out to us regarding our search process, and the first piece of advice we have given all of them is "communicate, communicate, communicate." I am confident that this open channel of communication allowed us to recruit and attract many good candidates for the open position and may be the reason we were able to get such a strong candidate to accept our offer.

While we don't know what the future will bring, and I certainly don't want to do a new search anytime soon, I hope the work that I and others did over the past 30 months will have helped make our community stronger and will give Rabbi Weisbrot a firm foundation upon which to craft her rabbinate. I am excited to be part of this new chapter of B'nai Sholom's history.

And as we approach our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I think that our founders would have been proud at the process that, to quote my dear friend and search committee member Ben Marvin, "the little temple that could" did.

Thanks to all for your support. May we all go from strength to strength!

## **'Less is More' Parole Reform Passes NYS Legislature with Help from B'nai Sholom Members Committed to Racial Justice**

Legislation called "Less is More," which will end the practice of sending people to prison for minor, technical parole violations following their prison sentences, passed the New York State Legislature on the final day of the session. "Why does this matter to us?" you might ask.

As a Brit Olam congregation, B'nai Sholom is committed to working toward a "world of compassion, justice and wholeness." With that in mind, 12 congregants from B'nai Sholom met on Zoom with four legislators and their staffs over the past few months to bring attention to the need for "Less is More" parole reform.

This bill was the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's New York State chapter (RAC-NY) advocacy project this year. In January, more than 300 clergy and lay leaders from around the state joined with leaders from RAC-NY and chose to advocate for passage of this bill.

Historically, 40 percent of all people sent to prison in New York have been sent for non-criminal technical violations, and many more Blacks are incarcerated for these types of parole violations than white people.

Brit Olam synagogues understand the "urgency of now," work to provide moral leadership and take congregational and community-based action. Through B'nai Sholom's involvement with RAC-NY's legislative campaign, it has again demonstrated what it means to fulfill the Brit Olam commitment.

## **A CLEAN (RIVER)SWEEP!**

On May 2, nine volunteers from B'nai Sholom\* and three from the Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition (CRICCC) helped clean up Church Street Park in Albany as part of this annual Riverkeeper event. We were assisted by Deputy Commissioner Justin Atlas of the Albany Department of Recreation, and we collected over 500 pounds of trash consisting of yard waste, tires, litter and broken glass. Our work improved the park, which serves an environmental justice community near the Port of Albany, substantially.

While a site has not yet been determined for next year, the event will be held on the first weekend in May. Riverkeeper will support any site in the Hudson River watershed. Contact Barry Pendergrass if you have a site in mind.

*\*BSRC participants: Gail Golderman, Seth Edelman, Lois Gordon, Becky and Ben Marvin, Martie and Phil Teumim, Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass.*

### **Adult Education Committee Wraps Up a Successful Virtual Year**

It was, despite the obvious challenge presented by a virtual world, a successful year at Adult Ed. We had the classes, the additional Torah study, the special events and our newly launched ChaiFlicks Film Group.

Many thanks to Rabbi Katz for his support and sharing his knowledge in so many ways. Now we look forward to Rabbi Weisbrot and heartily welcome her on our journey as a community of life-long learners.

### **July Kibbutzniks**

Ann Shapiro and Barry Pendergrass and Family - In memory of Gertrude Einstein, mother, and Edward Shapiro, brother

Larry and Gail Volk - In honor of the engagement of their daughter, Naomi, to Young Kwak

Shari Whiting - In memory of my daughter, Sarah, on her birthday, May 17

Amy Sternstein - In honor of Ben Marvin and Deb Adler for doing a wonderful job of filling in for Rabbi Katz

### **MAZAL TOV!**

... to Candy Raderman on her retirement after 24 years of teaching, primarily in health, at Bethlehem Central High School.

... to Gail and Larry Volk on the engagement of their daughter, Naomi, to Young Kwak.

# B'nai Sholom Legacy Society

Ensuring the Future  
of B'nai Sholom ...



... Creating a Jewish Legacy Today!

## **THANK YOU**

to the 53 Legacy Society members who have pledged or  
made an after-life gift or current contribution to  
BSRC's endowment!

## **It's not too late to join us!**

Contact a member of the Legacy Committee for more information: Mimi  
Bruce, Chair; Libby Liebschutz, Barry Pendergrass, Dave Ray and Stuart  
Schwartz

"As my ancestors planted for me, so do I plant for those who will come after me." -- Talmud Ta'anit 23

## ***A Note From Rabbi Cashman***

Dear Friends,

I was so pleased when you gifted me with a new guitar upon my retirement, or at least with the opportunity to choose a new guitar, based on discussions with congregational representative Phil Teumim, who probably owns more stringed instruments than I do. I'm happy to tell you that with the pandemic subsiding, I was able to acquire exactly what I wanted.

It's a Rainsong, a brand of guitars that are made from carbon fiber; graphite, not wood. This was important to me as the climate of Israel, especially Jerusalem – where I am planning to be living – is very dry, which is not conducive to good acoustic guitar health. This guitar is impervious to humidity issues. It's also lighter, which will be an advantage as I get older. It's smaller, too, being what's called an "Orchestra Model," as opposed to the Dreadnought size that I've had three of since 1970. Not a lot smaller, but a few millimeters less in length, width and depth. I think of it as cuddly. Finally, the new guitar is an acoustic/electric, which means I can plug it in, not that I have any plans to get an amplifier.

There are only three Rainsong dealers in New York State; the nearest is up in Hudson Falls, and it turns out they specialize in left-handed guitars. The next nearest dealer was in Connecticut, and he had this and two other small Rainsongs in stock, so I made an appointment and took a drive to choose one.

I'm exceedingly happy with how this guitar plays and sounds, and I'm grateful to the congregation and to others who contributed toward it, for giving it to me. If there's another B'nai Sholom coffeehouse, I'll bring it and play some.

Thanks!

Rabbi Don Cashman

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

7/2 Ilene Goldman; Cindy Berkowitz\*; Lynn Horowitz; Saul Ikler; Janet Samuels Greenbaum\*; Samuel Englander\*; Buehl Ray; Celia Kaufman\*; Robert Harris; Hyman Moskowitz; Gerald Fruiterman

7/9 Lillian Shanks; Richard T. Crawford; Eleanor Finkelstein; Esther Epstein\*; Harold Roth\*; Barbara Wachs; Edith Eidelman; Barney Ginsburg; Rudolph Stern

7/16 Morris Bosin; Sonny Brenner; Paul Tafler\*; Naftali Propp; Leslie Adler; Rosemary Kindlon Roe; Abraham Silverbush; Gerda Frankel; Jean Norris Rudman; Rose Lazoroff\*; Ellen Rudinger;

7/23 S. Gerald Duckor; Dror Koren; Adele Pastor; Bernice Smith; Fred Aron; Benjamin Binewitch\*

7/30 Kim Kuang Ho ; Helen Pollack Adler; Alex M. Rabineau\*; Samuel C. Warshaw\*; Rose Gottesman Pollack; Jacob Stein; Peter Pflanz

*\*denotes that a Perpetual Memorial has been established.*

## The Congregation Notes with Thanks These Contributions:

### General Fund

In memory of **Carla Oblas** by Amy Sternstein.

In memory of **Mildy Fischel** by Mark and Cheryl Reeder.

With thanks for **covering part of the final costs to repair the wheelchair lift for the bima** by Barbara and Jack Devore.

In memory of **Earl Marvin** by Becky and Ben Marvin.

In memory of **Herbert Malsky** by Phil and Martie Teumim.

In memory of **Christa Polednik** by Phil and Martie Teumim.

In memory of **Rae Spitalnic** by Katelyn Ouellette and David DiPaola.

In memory of **Gordon Edelman** by Seth Edelman.

In memory of **Helaine Plaut** by Phil and Martie Teumim.

In memory of **Helaine Plaut** by Barney Horowitz.

In memory of **Helaine Plaut** by Judy Lee and Bill Herbert.

In memory of **Helaine Plaut** by Herb and Ruth Swift.

In memory of **Helaine Plaut** by Carol and Doug Smith.

In memory of **Gerry Green** by Ellie and Randy Davis.

In memory of **Werner P. Frankel** by Herb and Ruth Swift.

In memory of **Ernst Swiwcz** by Herb and Ruth Swift.

In honor of **Julie Novkov for moderating the Shared Legacies program** with thanks from the Adult Ed and Social Action Committees.

In memory of **Carla Oblas** by Roy and Judy Fruiterman.

### Vera Propp – Books for Babies Fund

In memory of **Hal Rosenthal** by Mari Vosburgh.

In memory of **Helaine Plaut** by Mari Vosburgh.

### Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In memory of **Elihu Modlin** by Julie Novkov and Joel Bloom.

The congregation notes with sorrow these deaths that occurred in the first half of the year:

Christa Polednik, mother of Doris Levinn and mother-in-law of Mitch Levinn

Herbert Malsky, father of Matt Malsky and father-in-law of Nancy Newman

Carla Oblas, sister of Rema Goldstein

Elihu Modlin, father of Nancy Modlin Katz

Helaine Plaut, mother of Ben Marvin and mother-in-law of Becky Marvin

May their memories forever be for a blessing.

# Thank You!

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

**RABBI:** Danielle Weisbrot (eff. 7/1/2021)  
**RABBI EMERITUS:** Donald P. Cashman  
**PRESIDENT:** Julie Novkov can be reached at [julienovkov@hotmail.com](mailto:julienovkov@hotmail.com)  
**OFFICE MANAGER:** Christine Blackman can be reached at [christine@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us](mailto:christine@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us)  
**BOOKKEEPER:**  
**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>
August.....	July 14
September.....	August 11