



Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism
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Our mission is to perpetuate Jewish life and identity through a welcoming community of spirituality, learning, service, joy and worship

JANUARY 2015 / KISLEV - SHEVAT 5775

President's Message

Dear THOI,

Our Chanukah week was a great tribute to our members and especially to the women's group segment of the congregation. On Monday, December 15, all those who had promised food to the Christmas Eve meal at the Valley Mission, did, in fact, take their items to Eric Stamer Catering. On Thursday, December 18, the women's group furnished a dinner for the free clinic volunteers at Augusta Health. It was a lot of work, especially considering the party we were preparing for Friday. Friday, December 19, saw a food bazaar provided by, once again, the ladies, which netted \$225. The Chanukah pot luck meal was abundant, varied and delicious. The Philadelphia knishes made it an out-of-body experience. I thank you all for your generosity. The next week on December 24 found us serving that meal at the Mission. Such a busy time!

January is on us now with three services. Friday, January 9 at 7:30 pm, Friday January 23 at 7:30 pm and Saturday January 31 at 10 am. Please plan to attend one, two, or all three of these. In addition, on January 10 a Medieval and Renaissance group called Alkemie will perform in our sanctuary at 7:30 pm. The women's group meets at 2 pm on January 18; and lastly the Board of Directors meets on January 21 at 7 pm.

I believe it was last January 17 that Dmitri Volkov played his cello for us prior to a Friday night service. It was a lovely event. Then just a few months later he died. Life is really inscrutable.

The Board of Directors just finished tackling the budget for 2015. This was a difficult task this year. If you are thinking of giving a donation to THOI, now would be the time.

Expectations for January are usually low. Maybe your January will be a surprisingly happy, exciting month. Best wishes.

Rosalie Waterman, temple president

From the Rabbi's Desk

Dear Temple House of Israel Congregants and Friends,

We close out the year on mixed notes, but overall things seem positive. Several of our number have had health or other issues, and we wish them a full refuah shelemah, speedily. The Chanukah Bazaar, Potluck and service were joyously celebrated and enjoyed in the past few days. Participation in the Valley Mission Christmas Eve dinner is coming up soon, and appears to be on track. Plans for other upcoming events, including concerts, are shaping up and look wonderful.

Looking forward, I note that there is something ironically symmetrical feeling about the secular and Jewish calendar this month. January 1st, known as New Year's day, is often thought to follow a night of overindulgence, and often includes a surfeit of sports viewing. This year, it is the same day as Ta'anit Asara Be'Tevet, the fast of the 10th of Tevet (commemorating the siege of Jerusalem) on the Jewish calendar. I am not quite sure what message you may take from that overlap, but the juxtaposition seems to me somehow oddly appropriate, and to highlight the value of the path of moderation – so celebrate responsibly. ☺

January 30th to February 1st is the weekend of MAJYK, the junior youth group. All 6th to 8th grade students are eligible to attend. Contact Becky Mintzer or Dara Hall for more information. The Shorty youth group will be hosting several other regional youth groups from Reform congregations for their Ski Weekend event on February 6th-7th. Be sure to join them for a lively Shabbat service on Friday night, the 6th.

Rabbi's Message

The Torah Parashiot through the month of January are Vayechi, Shemot, Vaera, Bo and Beshalach. We are in year 2 of the triennial cycle (the middle or second part of the cycle).

As I write this, we are in the midst of the holiday of Chanukah. This holiday is a little confused. On the one hand, it celebrates that there were those among us who fought and refused to give in on what they believed; the Maccabees would not accept being forced to conform to someone else's religious dictates and beliefs, even though the odds on overcoming the oppressor were infinitesimal. On the other hand, it celebrates that the Maccabees were able to succeed, not by their own skill, power, or ability, but only through the intervention and assistance of G-d, so that the miraculous and unexpected outcome was entirely due to G-d. On the third hand, it celebrates that even when the victory had been secured through G-d's help, those who battled were still unprepared, and did not have what they needed to re-establish worship of G-d as an act of faith, not reason, by proceeding, and not waiting. On yet the other hand, there was simply not enough oil for the lamp (menorah), so again G-d had to intervene with a miraculous event – the oil that burned for far longer than it could be expected to last, until they could make and bring more. In short, we are really celebrating G-d acting to support those who follow a path of steadfast faith and belief in accordance with the principles that are set forth in the guidelines provided by G-d. It is not a celebration of human strength, reason or capacity. What we specifically do NOT celebrate is the Maccabees or any military success. They didn't actually defeat the enemy. They were people in a tough position, but what they did is not especially noteworthy; in fact, it is what is expected of each of us, what Jewish ethics and values define as the proper or right action.

Thus, this holiday is entirely about belief and faith, the acknowledgement of the power of G-d, and the acceptance that we are blessed with miracles. Not miracles like parting of the Reed Sea or the destruction of armies, but more subtle miracles like things working out when it doesn't seem as if they will. These include the everyday miracles, such as the rising of the sun, the ordering of the planets, the birth of a child, or the growth of a flower. In all of them, and through all, it is possible to see the influence of G-d. The lights of Chanukah are a reminder that that influence radiates out through the universe and touches all.

May we all be illumined by the light that our Chanukiot represent, and be nourished and sustained in our choices and actions, so that we can serve as a source of light to others and the world around us, today, in the days ahead, and for years to come.

B'virkat Shalom,
Rabbi Joe Blair

Contacting the Rabbi

Please note: Rabbi Joe may be reached by email at RabbiJoeB@hotmail.com (Other email addresses may not reach him in a timely fashion or at all.) He reads email regularly, except on Jewish holidays or Shabbat, when he does not use the computer. His cell phone number is 925-272-8563 (925-2-RAVJOE). PLEASE CALL if you have any urgent messages or in case of an emergency, and please let Rabbi Joe know if you or anyone you now is ill or would want a call or visit for any reason. You are also invited to contact Rabbi Joe to arrange an appointment to meet.

Religious School

Wishing everyone a very happy, peaceful, and prosperous New Year. We'll see everyone back at Religious Sschool in 2015!!

NEWS FROM THE PEWS

❖ I'd love to include your news, but I can't if I don't know about it....

January Calendar and Services

				1 New Year's Day	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 Shabbat Services 7:30	10 Alkemie concert at 7:30
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18 Women's Group at 2:00	19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	20	21 Temple Board Meet 7:00	22	23 Shabbat Services 7:30	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31 Shabbat Services 10:00

Oneg hosts for January 9: the Brands and Browns

Oneg hosts for January 23: Ruth and Vera

Oneg hosts for January 31: Rosalie and Ellen Schorsch

The Women's Group

The Chanukah party on December 19, along with our first (but probably not last) Food Bazaar was a whole lot of fun. What better way to have fun than with delicious food ! A good time was had by all.

Thanks to Patty, Ellen Schorsch, Rosalie, Debbie, Beth, Ellen Werther, Bonny Strassler, Elizabeth and Martha for providing another delicious meal for the Free Clinic. It was very much appreciated.

We will be discussing many ideas for the Winter and Spring at our January 18th meeting. We will be going out to dinner sometime in the Spring and will continue our periodic Dutch treat lunch dates. TBA. Elizabeth and Ken have offered to give dance lessons, and we are hoping to have a discussion about *Chapters of the Heart*, the book edited by Rabbi Sue. It is available at The Sacred Circle and our Judaica Shop.

There is an SPCA box in the store room to hold your donations for the organization. Elizabeth will put a list on the bulletin board which indicates what donations the SPCA can use.

Best,
Ellen Werther

Donations

Thank you to these generous people who have recently contributed to our temple congregation:

Gregg & Freddy Goldenberg Family Fund

Debbie Jacobs

Ken & Elizabeth Schwartz in memory of Benjamin & Harriet Schwartz

Celebrations

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU AND YOU AND YOU AND YOU:

Michael Degen celebrates on January 6

Lea Sutker (Larry's Mom) celebrates on the 10th

Richard Young is ready for Medicare on January 16th

Doug Degen on the 31st

January Yahrzeits

David Biatch

Sophie Cohen

Robert Davis

Morris Degen

Marjorie Edelman

Milton Finkel

Leah Frank

Arthur Kaufman

Pauline Prince

Emily Schorsch

Daniel Seligmann

Morton Sloane

Lamartine Strauss

Augusta Switzer

Flora Switzer

Solomon Switzer

Roberta Weber

Abraham Weinberg

Irene Lebson

Ethel Weinberg

Johanna Weinberg