



Temple Beth Abraham

Annual Congregational Meeting

June 13, 2017

**PROPOSED SLATE
OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES FOR 2017 - 2018
AS RECOMMENDED BY THE GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE**

Officers / Executive Committee

President
Exec Vice President (First Vice President)
Second Vice President
Recording Secretary
Treasurer, Finance Chair

Jamie Wilson
Jennifer Povman
Open
Mark Polisar
Diane Gross

Standing Committee Chairpersons

Adult Education
Board of Education
Fund Raising and Development (Co-chairs)
House
Member Services (Co-chairs)
Ritual
Tikkun Olam (Co-chairs)

Bernice Rogowitz
Steve Gosset
Julie Gur & Meredith Siegel
Roy Solomon
Linda Walter & Amy Friedman
Herb Baer
Melissa Baer & Andrea White

At-Large Trustees

At-large Trustee, Terms Expiring 2018

Debra Drattell *
Karen Filler *
Ronit Lubell *
Glen Markowitz

At-large Trustee, Terms Expiring 2019

Dave Greenspoon*
Allison Moskowitz*
Anna Weiss*
Amy Zerman*

At-large Trustee, Terms Expiring 2020

Neil Bruckner
Stuart Kolbert
Loren Ratner
Risa Swersey

* Not up for election – completing existing terms

Nominating Committee: Jen Povman (Chair), Melissa Baer, Amy Friedman, Amy Kessler, Sharon Kirschner, Pam Barkley, ex officio: Michael Karnes

Adult Education Committee Report 2016-2017

Committee Chair: Bernice Rogowitz

The Adult Ed program is built on a strong foundation of ongoing programs. Every week, Rabbi David's Torah Study provides thought-provoking discussions of the week's portion, interpreted in a modern context. Monday afternoon is Mah Jongg, a growing group of devotees hosted by Sheila Buitikant. Every month, Marla Peers, Melissa Baer, and Risa Swersey lead Movie Mavens, which provides Saturday evening entertainment and discussion about Israeli and Jewish movies, and Kimberly Marcus welcomes us to Women's Circle, where participants take turns leading discussions on personal, intellectual, and cultural themes. Every other month, Linda Gerstman escorts us through the themes of a timely novel in Book Club. These activities attract a steady attendance and reach a wide audience. For example, Women's Circle attracts 12-15 attendees each month, but over the course of the year, over 40 women have participated.

As the incoming Chair, my first idea was to launch a survey, to learn what kinds of programs and events would attract our community. I enlisted Sharon DeLevie's help, and we launched the survey online. Although only 50 people responded, we learned that different groups preferred different time slots, and that there was a thirst for cultural and intellectual topics. To address these needs, we launched several new programs:

Two Brunches. In the survey we learned that people missed Sunday Brunches, so we brought them back! The first brunch, co-sponsored by the Israel committee, featured Dr. George Keteku, who talked about the connection between Israel and Ghana, and the important role Israel played in mentoring Ghana through their independence. In the second, Rabbi David treated us to insightful and often humorous parallels between Sports and Religion, delighting everyone, but especially the dads and sons in the audience.

Two Series of Art Lectures. We kicked off our arts program with a four-lecture class on Jewish Art and Architecture by architect Bruce Levy. Special thanks to Hannah Gross, who obtained the grant to support this activity, as part of her work for the Mainstream Program at Westchester Community College. In the spring, Cantor Margot brought us on a musical journal from Biblical times to the present, in a three-lecture class on Jewish Music through the Ages.

Two Art Workshops. To enhance our own personal artistic expression, we hosted two Art Workshops. Laurie Forman demonstrated watercolor techniques and helped us create paintings in her Watercolor Workshop. Cantor Mandi Beckenstein took us on a journey through the art of Jewish Paper Cutting and everyone left with their own paper artwork. We also launched the First Wednesday Art Workshop, and budding artists drop in on the first Wednesday of the month to create.

Israeli Music Cabaret. The highlight of our Cultural Arts Program this year was the Israeli Cabaret, with music by Dror Perl and the Israeli Jazz Project. One hundred Temple members, including 40 Chai-Plus honorees, hosted by the Membership Committee, swayed to music from Israel's many musical genres. Cantor Margot's rendition of *Erev Shel Shoshanim* was remarkable. Thanks to Marla Peers and the Israel Committee and to the Cantor for their enormous contribution to the success of this event, and to Debra Drattell, Karen Filler, and Shelly Greenspan.

Three Intellectual Lectures. In the fall, Stessa Peers presented three Lectures on Judaism under the Crescent and under the Cross, which explored Jewish life during times when we were minorities in Christian-majority and Islam-majority countries. In the spring, David Frank's lecture on Mysteries of the Jewish Calendar told

a fascinating story woven with astronomical, mathematical, cultural, and historical threads. Antonia (Julie) Martinez talked about The Hidden Lives of Crypto Jews and the conversion and expulsion of over 90% of the world's Jews from Spain and Portugal.

Hebrew Conversation. This year we launched TBA's first weekly conversational Hebrew course, taught by congregant David Brandwein, which is part Hebrew conversation and part stories about life in Israel by our charming *moreh*.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with so many gifted and passionate teachers, leaders, and speakers this year, and want to send a special call-out to Stuart Skolnick for his good-natured support and encouragement. We're already starting to plan activities and programs for next year, so please let us know what interests you, and whether you, or someone you know, would like to contribute.

Fundraising Committee Report 2016-2017

Committee Co-Chairs: Julie Gur and Meredith Siegel

The Fundraising Committee works with members of the Synagogue on different events to raise money for future use at Temple Beth Abraham. The primary fundraiser we had this year was the Gala honoring and celebrating the dedication and hard work of our Past Presidents. At the event there were raffles sold to augment the funds raised. Additionally there were "ads" sold for a video journal which was displayed on a screen throughout the evening. Fundraising also brought back the ever popular Progressive Dinner in February. In addition we held a Comedy Night in December featuring three comics. It was a wonderful night filled with much laughter and fun. We also created TBA's latest cookbook, "Eat Something....You'll Feel Better!" which we sold throughout the year at different events and is available on the TBA website. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the many members of the congregation and staff at Temple Beth Abraham who gave their time and effort to help make these events a success. We are grateful for the efforts of our wonderful volunteers. A SPECIAL THANK YOU to the TBA Staff and Stuart Skolnick. The fundraising committee has several big plans for next year including a Gala honoring our very own Rabbi Holtz for his 25 years of dedication and service to the Jewish community.

House Committee Report 2016-2017

Committee Chair: Neil Bruckner

Our facilities staff consists of Larry Murray and Jamie Valencia who continue to do a great job maintaining the quality of our synagogue. Thank you also to our unofficial House Committee member, Stuart Skolnick, who is a great help and always available to be our sounding board. Wherever possible we have been making repairs using our wonderful in house staff rather than calling in a contractor. This has saved several thousands of dollars this year. This past year we had replaced 2 of our 3 boilers, which allowed us to keep the building comfortable for our staff, clergy and congregants when they are with us.

We continued to enhance the appearance of our building by providing additional flowers and shrubbery and working more closely with our new landscaper, who also is in charge of our snow removal. Our efforts and goals are to continue to use environmentally friendly products and that is our mantra. We will continue this process as we move forward toward next year.

Israel Committee Report 2016-2017

Committee Chair: Marla Peers

This was a very successful year with some innovative programming and collaborations with other committees in addition to our continued projects. Our core members, all of whom are instrumental in promoting our programs, include: Phil Rothenberg, Roberta Rothkin, Jane Silverman, Rabbi David Holtz, Shelley Greenspan, Sharon Kirschner, and Marla Peers

- Shekelvestors, an independent investment club that is an off-shoot of the Israel Committee is in its 5th year. Membership has grown (new members welcome; contact Cantor Mandi Beckenstein or Marla Peers) with investments in several Israeli companies
- Christmas in July – a memorable evening of Chinese food and the movie, “Noodle” (July)
- Sunday Brunch featuring a talk by Dr. George Keteku about the special relationship between Ghana and Israel (September 18)
- Scholar-in-Residence: Yiscah Smith (January 13-14)
- Israeli Film and Feast from the Middle East – Israeli dinner followed by the film, “East Jerusalem West Jerusalem” (March 4)
- Co-sponsored A Musical Cabaret with Dror Perl and the Israeli Jazz Project (April 1)
- *Yom haAtzmaut* (Israel’s Independence Day) Celebration – Dinner and Speaker: Rabbi Fred Schwalb, President of Friends of *Beit Morasha* (May 1).
- Celebrate Israel Parade (June 4)
- Movie Mavens continues to highlight many Israeli films (donated by the Israel Committee) which this year included:
 - *Footnote*
 - *Seven Minutes in Heaven*
 - *A Borrowed Identity*
 - *Gett: The Trial of Viviane Amsalem*
 - *A Place in Heaven*

Member Services Committee 2016-2017 Report

Committee Co-Chairs: Amy Friedman and Linda Walter

The Member Services Committee continued to work this year to reach congregants, to recruit and welcome new members, and to appreciate and honor TBA's long term members. In coordinating its activities, Member Services engaged with the Clergy, Board of Education, Adult Education and TBA's professional and support staff in planning and coordinating activities. Member Services is appreciative of the efforts of the volunteers who have helped make the events meaningful, fun, and engaging.

Numbers: As of June 1 the office reports 426 members. Of these, 10 are Gateway members. In 2016-17 we welcomed 21 new families. An additional 2 families were Religious School only. Of note, at least 3 of the new members are returning to TBA after having left in previous years.

Programmatic Highlights from this past year include:

- Rosh Hashanah *Oneg*: Member Services welcomed the entire congregation on the first day of Rosh Hashanah with an al fresco *Oneg*.
- High Holy Days Family Services: Member Services greeted families with young children on Rosh Hashanah (complete with honey sticks) and Yom Kippur to afternoon services led by Rabbi Holtz and Cantor Goldberg. These services, open to both TBA members and the wider community (no tickets required), were well attended by families with babies, toddlers, and young children.
- Pancake Brunch at Religious School Opening Day: On the first Sunday of the academic year, volunteers served a Pancake Brunch, complete with "do it yourself" toppings to families with children enrolled in our Religious School. This was a departure from the usual bagel and cream cheese breakfast. The event was very well received and we plan on making this an annual event. This provided a great opportunity to make connections between new and returning families.
- Chai Plus Recognition: Partnering with Adult Education, we invited all of our Chai Plus Members to be the Temple's guests at the musical evening with the Israeli Jazz Project held April 1. The response we received was very positive and the event was well attended.
- Baby Boomer Trivia Night: In February we had our kickoff event for the newly formed Baby Boomer Group. We went to Trivia Night at local pub and had a great time. We hope to make this group an active one at TBA.
- Chavurah Program: This successful program continued under Mark Polisar's leadership. This is a program within TBA for people who share similar interests and commit to group get-togethers throughout the year.
- Picnic: In May, Member Services sponsored an expanded end-of-year picnic and carnival for the entire congregation. We had a wonderful afternoon of food, community, and fun. The added entertainment and expanded food options were well received. It was the best attended end-of-year picnic in recent memory.

- Ongoing Communication with Members and Potential Members: Member Services engages with members with specific questions and needs and connects them to clergy, professional staff, and others as appropriate. With respect to potential new members, Member Services engages the potential new member in a conversation about our Temple community, answering any and all questions. Potential new member meetings with Rabbi Holtz and/or Cantor Goldberg were then carefully planned by our clergy staff, with specific thanks to Clergy Coordinator Irene Metz and Operations Director Stuart Skolnick.

Significant time and effort was devoted to communicating with individuals interested in TBA and its programs.

Queries were received from a variety of sources, including the TBA website, calls to the office, and referrals from other TBA members, committees, and staff.

The new contribution structure has sparked interest in those who have heard about it. Member Services anticipates that ongoing engagement of members regarding the voluntary pledge structure will continue to be the focus of significant effort, including encouraging contributions by new and existing members at levels that support TBA's mission. Advertising goes out in the summer from Member Services to increase awareness of our Religious School and our High Holyday Services.

PJ Library Report 2016-2017

Committee Chair: Melissa Baer

The PJ Library is in its sixth year of partnership with Temple Beth Abraham (TBA). TBA partnered with PJ Library in April 2011 to inspire family engagement in Jewish life and stronger connections to the Jewish community through simple bedtime stories. PJ Library is a program of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation (HGF). HGF recently created the PJ Library New York Partnership Network and has invited us to transition to this new program. We will be doing so, effective June 15, 2017.

The Harold Grinspoon Foundation, the Steinhardt Foundation and Jewish Education Project, the Union for Reform Judaism's Women of Reform Judaism (URJ-WRJ), and TBA's Harriet Verter Jewish Education Fund (HVJEF) sponsor our PJ Library subscriptions. Subscriptions are annual and cost \$100.00 each. HVJEF provides \$20.00 per subscription. I receive a staff subsidy of approximately \$1,200.00 year for overseeing the PJ Library at TBA, which I donate to the HVJEF to help fund subscriptions.

TBA's PJ Library program reaches families over a large geographic area. Our largest catchment areas are: Tarrytown/Sleepy Hollow (30), Irvington (33), Dobbs Ferry (14); and Ossining (11). In addition to these areas, we have subscribers in: Ardsley, Armonk, Briarcliff Manor, Bronxville, Chappaqua, Croton-on-Hudson, Elmsford, Hartsdale, Hawthorne, Mount Kisco, Pleasantville, Purdys, Scarsdale, Somers, White Plains, Yonkers, and Yorktown Heights. We also have subscribers in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Virginia.

Temple Beth Abraham offers one book per family for families with children ages 6 months to 8 years. As of May 19, 2017 we have 139 families actively enrolled. This is a 14.9% increase over last July's number. The total number of subscriptions we have enrolled since inception is 211 (Families age out or move out of our

catchment area). The Children's Garden Center nursery school, the JCC on the Hudson's Early Childhood program, and TBA's Religious School (Kindergarten through 2nd grade) currently receive PJ Library books to use in their classrooms with the children enrolled in their programs.

We had been sending birthday greetings to the PJ Library children, inviting them to attend the Friday night Family Services or the monthly Tot Shabbat program. We changed the delivery method from postcards to e-greetings in March 2016.

When Temple Beth Abraham's PJ Library partnership becomes part of the "PJ Library New York Partnership Network," our participation will be focused on creating "engagement programming." We will contribute information to the PJ Library e-newsletter (via Kveller.com) rather than send our own newsletter to only those families enrolled through TBA. The Kveller e-newsletter currently reaches 20,000+ families in the five Boroughs, Westchester, and on Long Island. There will be regional emails sent just to Westchester PJ families (via Kveller) that we will send our content to, as well.

Tikkun Olam Committee Report 2016-2017

Committee Co-Chairs: Andrea White and Melissa Baer

- Rosh Hashanah Honey Sale
- Yom Kippur Food Drive
- Backpack Collection for *La Asociación*
- Light One Candle Program for *La Asociación*
- Alt Gift Guide
- Volunteering for Food Bank Westchester
- Crafts for a Cause – Knitting Projects
- Blood Drive
- Pet Blessing & Pet Food Drive
- Everyone Counts – *Omer* Food Collection for *Leket* & The Food Bank of Westchester

We would like to thank you for volunteering your time, experience, donations and ideas this past year!

Thank you to Julie Gur for organizing the Honey from the Heart fundraiser. This year we donated just over \$1,000 to MOSAIC of Westchester.

Thank you to everyone who donated to the Yom Kippur Food Drive. A special thank you to our teen helpers and the Leary Family for sponsoring the truck rental.

Thank you to those who donated to the backpack drive. We filled almost 100 backpacks for *La Asociación's* Literacy program. The children and teachers were so appreciative! The children sent personalized thank you notes accompanied by pictures of themselves wearing their backpacks.

Thank you to our families who helped sort food items at the Food Bank for Westchester in December. We had a great time and hope to do it again, soon. We are working on another date. (The Food Bank has so many volunteer requests that they limit us to one group event every six months. There are also only a very limited number of Sundays that are available.)

Our "Light One Candle" program gave families the opportunity to shop for Christmas gifts at a NU Toy Store in Tarrytown. Families contribute \$5.00 toward each \$25.00 gift card (your generous donations make up the other \$20.00). This makes it feel much less like a handout for those receiving the gift.

Thank you to all the knitters and crocheters who have made such amazing items this year. We donated 25 blankets and shawls to the Hebrew Home at Riverdale by RiverSpring Health. We also donated several pillows to My Second Home, a day care facility that caters to older adults with some level of physical and/or cognitive impairment. Current projects include making toy bunnies, which will be donated to children's hospitals, and making scarves and shawls, which will be donated to DOROT for their winter package deliveries in January 2018.

TBA Cares has provided meals for congregants who have lost loved ones. Thank you to the great number of volunteers who stand ready to help set-up or clean-up for *shiva*, to shop for someone who is ill or recovering from surgery, or to provide a congregant a ride to or from a doctor appointment or the synagogue for an event or services.

Thank you to Judi Markowitz and Toby Helfenstein for another successful blood drive. Thank you to Jane Rubin who supplied so many delicious home-baked goodies that donors got care packages as well as treats! Thank you to our escorts, Henry Demarest and Melissa Jacobson. Thank you to all the donors, particularly Cydney Wilson, who was our youngest donor, donating blood for the first time, at newly 16 years old!

Thank you to the seven or eight families who came out on May 7 in overcast weather for the third annual Blessing of the Animals and Pet Food drive. Thank you everyone for the much-needed donations and a special thank you to Kimberly Marcus who transported the donated items to the Hudson Valley Pet Food Pantry in White Plains.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Every1Counts *Omer Tzedakah* collection for *Leket* and The Food Bank of Westchester. Your donations give these organizations the ability to purchase \$4.00 worth of food for each \$1.00 donated.

On April 2, over 100 people participated in a Passover Seder led by Rabbi David Holtz. This event was the brainchild of Jennifer Povman, and was made possible through a grant from the UJA-Federation of NY's Engage Jewish Service Corps Synagogue Initiative, as well as funding from TBA's Harriet Verter Jewish Education Fund, *Tikkun Olam* Committee, and anonymous donors. Thank you!

Rabbi Holtz and Jennifer Povman created a unique *Haggadah* for this event. There were over 60 guests from at least four area churches and one mosque. Thank you to the organizing committee: Jennifer Povman, Michael Karnes, Jane Rubin, Vicki Savitch, Eva Fischer, Arlene Kolbert, Kimberly Marcus, Jeff and Lisa Bergman, and Jenny Libien. Thank you to Michael Povman for the photographs. Thank you to Pomp Caterers, Johnston's Florist, and Grape Expectations for food, flowers, and wine. And a great big thank you to all the volunteers who helped host our guests at the event.

We are so thankful to be part of such a vibrant, caring community and again, send our thanks out to you, the congregants of Temple Beth Abraham.