



Temple House of Israel Bulletin

A Member Congregation of the Union for Reform Judaism
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<http://uahc.org/congs/va/va008/>

July-August 2004, Tammuz/Av/Elul 5764

From the Rabbi's Disk

My dear fellow Valley Jews and Friends, Shalom!

Can it really be time to write my summer Bulletin column? How can that be? It feels as if the year has just begun, and here it is, already at an end! I guess it is true that time flies when you are having fun! Looking back, it certainly seems to me that this has been a very full and productive year, rich and sweet. I thank each of you for the part you have played in making our Jewish community vital and active, and more personally, for making me feel welcomed and part of the community.

RECENTLY

The most recent event was the Vespers service on the fourth of July weekend. There was a lovely picnic by a group from the congregation at Gypsy Hill park beforehand, lots of food and great conversation, with music in the background by a band performing in the park. The Vespers service program began at 7 p.m. with some music by a choir, a few remarks, and an introduction of me by our Betty Pendleton. Thank you Betty!

I spoke on the Parashat Hashavuah – the Torah portion for the week – Balak (particularly on the story of the non-Jewish prophet Balaam and the talking donkey, Numbers 22-24). The crowd of about 300-400 was attentive and polite. Afterwards the choir sang [the benediction they offered was the Threefold Priestly blessing (may the Lord bless you and keep you....)], and the program ended. The group of congregants re-gathered and sat and talked for another two hours. It was a wonderful evening. I certainly hope that we can repeat it soon.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

In July, there are two fast days. On the 6th was the Fast of the 17th of Tamuz, in Hebrew called Tzom Shiva Asar Be'Tamuz, commemorating the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem. This kicked off the three weeks of mourning that culminate on July 27th in the second fast day, Tisha Be'Av, the Ninth day of the month of Av. Tisha Be'Av is the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, commemorating the destruction (TWICE!) of the Temple in Jerusalem. Both of these are fasts from Sunup to Sundown. On Tisha Be'Av the custom is to read the scroll of Eicha (Lamentations) in the evening (July 26th).

On August 18th we usher in the Hebrew month of Elul, the last month of the year. Elul leads up to the new year beginning on Rosh Hashanah, which this year begins on the evening of September 15th. Make your plans with that in mind!

On August 29th the Religious School principals are planning a 'paint and decorate' the classrooms day. Students and parents are invited to take part in making the classrooms more fun and interesting looking. Keep an eye open for more information from Margee Greenfield and Ellen Defriece.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the Congregational event in August at Happy Hollow. It should be a lot of fun! And our year will officially kick off on September 3rd with Friday night services at 7:30 pm! I am looking forward to seeing you there!

FEEDBACK

As I have said in past, I am looking for feedback from each of you. I am always happy to accept compliments (who isn't?), but I especially want to hear how you think I can do better in the future, and what we need to do to make our Jewish community stronger and more vibrant. What did we try this year that was especially good, and what should we not do again? What should we have done that did not happen? What do you think would make our community even more fun and provide a richer Jewish experience? Please feel free to communicate your thoughts to me by email, in writing, by telephone, or in person, and if for some reason you are shy or don't want to speak to or contact me directly, you can provide your views to a member of the board, and ask that they pass it along anonymously. I am sincerely seeking your views on how to make things even better.

KEEP IN TOUCH!

I am on vacation for July and August, but in the event of any emergency, please feel free to call, email, or otherwise contact me. If there is something that cannot wait, we can make an appointment to meet to discuss whatever is on your mind or for pastoral counseling. Although my schedule over the next few months is not fixed, I will always try to make time to speak to or meet with congregants. And to that end, if you should hear or know of anyone who is ill or hospitalized or who might otherwise wish a visit or call from me, please be sure to let me know as soon as you can. You can leave a message on the telephone answering machine at the temple, call me at home, or email me.

I want to close by thanking each of you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your rabbi. It has been a wonderful year. I am looking forward to returning full time in September after I have a chance to rest, relax, and refresh myself in preparation.

B'virvat shalom (with Blessings of Peace),
Rabbi Joe Blair

I would like to recap briefly some of the highlights of what has taken place this year.
General Activities This Year

I was hired with the intention to begin in August of 2003. I began to meet with congregants and board members in late June and throughout July. I began having office hours at the start of August, and have been seeing members ever since.

I applied to and became a provisional member of the CCAR.

Working with Sherri Alt, Margee Greenfield, and Ellen Defriece, we have laid out a proposed Confirmation program for those who have had their B'nai Mitzvah and join the Youth Group. It serves those from age 13 (post seventh grade) to 18 (Senior in High School). The program was generally well accepted by the participants, but we have had difficulties with implementing it because of scheduling conflicts. To address that concern, we are looking into having the splitting off the Youth Group meetings from the Confirmation program, and having the Confirmation class meet monthly on Sundays.

In the context of Bikkur Cholim, I have tried to make myself available in person or by phone to all who were hospitalized, home-bound, or otherwise might appreciate contact. This has included visiting congregants in RMH, AMC, UVA hospital, several private care facilities, and on occasion at the homes of individuals, as my schedule and location permitted; and often being in touch by telephone. Because I am in town only on certain days, I have not been able to visit everyone while they were in hospital, but I have tried to be in touch no matter where I was, and to follow

up on their progress.

In terms of services, I have conducted a wide variety this year. Aside from regular Shabbat evening (Friday) services, during this year we held: a Selichot service before High Holidays; Shabbat morning services; B'nai Mitzvah services; Yizkor services; a Tashlich service; a Consecration service; community awareness Shabbat; Chanukah, Purim, Shavuot, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Yom HaShoah, Yom Ha'atzma'ut, Yom Hazikaron, and Yom Yerushalayim services and/or observances; and Religious School, Youth Group, Family, and Youth services. We also held Tu B'shevat and Passover Seders, as well as a very successful Chocolate Seder with mostly interfaith attendees.

In Adult Education, I offered two levels of Hebrew literacy, an Introduction to Jewish Living, a class on serving as a Gabbai, and the Adult B'nai Mitzvah class (ongoing). I have also conducted a weekly Parashat Hashavuah (Torah Portion) session. I have been working with several adults on liturgy skills, and I have instructed four conversion candidates (three of whom completed their process recently), and two adult B'nai Mitzvah candidates (outside the class being offered). I also have been meeting with congregants one-on-one to study specific topics on occasion.

I was the instructor for Kitah Daled Judaica this year, as well as tutoring all the B'nai Mitzvah students intensively. I also served as a resource to the other teachers in the religious school, and as a quasi-member of the steering committee. I have been working closely with the co-principals for next year, and we are deep into planning and preparations.

I guest lectured at EMU and JMU for a variety of courses, and met with the JMU Hillel students on several occasions. I was a guest lecturer for "Torah from Virginia" put on by the Conservative Congregation in Roanoke VA.

I met with numerous groups from a variety of Churches in the area to answer questions and provide some background on Judaism.

MORE SPECIFICALLY

Religious Education

I have been deeply involved in Religious school this year. I consciously worked both with the steering committee and on my own as an instructor to raise the level of expectations for the students in each grade. I have been delighted and quite satisfied with the progress the students have made. In every case they have met or exceeded the expectations set. The next step is to make the curriculum more reflective of the higher expectations and better representative of the level at which we wish the students to be functioning at each grade level. This means that we will be introducing more substantive work earlier in the school program, and working to integrate the various levels to cover all the topics and materials. This will entail a fairly significant amount of change in when specific things are introduced and covered, and the depth in which they are covered, with ongoing fine-tuning over the next several years. This is certainly a 'work in progress' and will need continual adjustment as we proceed, as well as the active participation and support of the parents, and, most especially, of the teachers. I gratefully acknowledge a debt to those who have labored over the existing curriculum: all of this is built on that foundation.

Once all of the necessary qualified teachers for the religious school are identified and secured, I intend to 'float' among all classes.

I have been working closely with Margee Greenfield and Ellen Defriece (the incoming co-principals) on plans for next year. Everything from staffing, curriculum adjustment and fine tuning, to the structure of the day, from snacks offered to

activities provided during religious school, are all being given a good hard look, with input sought from as many of the groups that have a stake in the school as possible. I believe that Margee and Ellen will report on the results soon, if they have not yet. I think they will have some excellent suggestions that we can implement right away, as well as some longer term ideas that we will strive to achieve.

We have also been working on the religious school calendar for next year. The first day of Religious school will be Sunday, September 12th.

As I write this, we have had the pleasure of five B'nai Mitzvot for Kitah Daled for this school year. Each was a wonderful and joyous event, and the students did very well indeed. If you attended more than one of them, you saw just how well our Religious School students are being prepared for and how ready they are to lead this service marking their life-cycle event. You also should have seen how very different each service was: truly an individual expression of the student.

Youth Group

Members of our SHORTY Youth Group seem to enjoy and benefit from the group. The activities, discussions, and contact with other youth groups all seem to be positive and fun for them.

The only area I have been less than happy about is the problem of scheduling activities. It is utterly clear to me that these children are overprogrammed, and that the Youth Group and synagogue participation are not given a high priority. This is unfortunate, in my opinion: I believe that they would personally benefit from being more involved, both on a local and a regional level, in Youth Group, and it would show involvement in community activities on college applications.

I would love to see this given more priority for the participants, so that we could undertake more extensive and ambitious activities. One approach to this goal would be to make the Youth Group a joint project of the School and the Youth Advisor/Committee, and tie the two together more closely. This would allow a more rigorous program with more substantive study and learning for the Confirmation portion of the program. As for programs: so far, we have had discussions of such topics as Body Image, Piercings, and Tattoos; The Passion of the Christ (Gibson's film) and how those in the larger community around us see it and react; and Jewish Views on Death, Dying, and Mourning. There is a list of a dozen or more topics that the members generated at the beginning of the year, saying they would like to discuss each of them. Finding time, once again, is the only limitation.

I worked with Sherri to map out a 'Jewish New York' trip. The trip planning was very close to finalized, and the fund raising for it was very successful (thanks to all for your generosity), but the possibility of getting most or all of the members to participate at the same time proved virtually nil. Consequently, we have shelved the idea of this trip for the time being. Given that next year the biennial Kallah for NFTY is in Los Angeles, we will be hard-pressed to find sufficient funds for that alone, and we will need to wait to carry out the New York Trip for the first time until the following year (2005-2006). In any case, we will be working to beef up the Youth Group program, and make this even more exciting and fun for the members.

Adult Education

The Read Hebrew America Hebrew Literacy program has proven a true joy. Those who are involved have made fantastic progress, feel good about it, and have regularly told me that they are able to read and follow continually larger parts of the liturgy each week with confidence. I am very pleased and proud of and for them. As a result, I plan to offer this series again beginning next fall. I have already received calls from three congregants who wish to join the next class when it starts up. If you are

interested, please keep your eyes open for a Bulletin announcement in the Fall. The weekly Parashat Hashavuah (Torah Portion) discussion continued through June. The participants were enthusiastic and wish to resume in the Fall. The Introduction to Jewish Living course has drawn to a close. I styled this class as both a prerequisite for converts, and an informational course for anyone else interested. It met through the year, with a twenty session syllabus. I believe that I will offer it again after a hiatus, in 2005-2006, or 2006-2007. The Adult B'nai Mitzvah class met several times. About eight people expressed interest, and at this point, I believe that there will be a total of five who will each be studying actively towards their B'nai Mitzvah in the course of the next two years. If you are interested, it is still possible to join the class. Our next meeting is scheduled for June 27th at 3 pm.

Conversions

I actively worked with four people in preparation for conversion. One of them (a college student) is about to graduate and leave the area, two are congregants and will continue to be, and the fourth is considering joining the congregation. There are several others with whom I have been meeting infrequently who are considering conversion as an option, but who have not yet made a decision.

I was very happy to be a participant in a Beit Din recently at which a total of nine persons made their formal commitment to the Jewish people. I was delighted that three of those nine were candidates that I presented to the Beit Din, and very proud and happy that each one of them has affirmed their connection to the Jewish people and is now officially a member of our people.

Religious Services

I feel that services have generally gone well overall. I am so very appreciative of the support and assistance of Sarah Grove-Humphries with the musical aspect of our service. I also want to thank the congregants for their openness to new things, to variety, and to some experimentation in our worship services.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care has been an increasingly large part of my week for some time. I have had pastoral care sessions with congregants for a wide variety of issues during the course of the year. There are a broad range of issues that have arisen among those in our community, and I am honored that some of you have felt comfortable and inclined to speak with me about them. I can only hope that my limited efforts are of some small consolation or comfort to you.

Outreach

During the course of the year I have been in contact with several persons who have called or emailed concerning rabbinic services we offer, or had a question. I have also met with several persons in the community who have not been involved but who seem interested in forging a connection with a rabbi. I am hopeful that these contacts will encourage membership and participation in future.

Ed. Note: We all knew it was an extraordinary year, but... wow!

<p>President's Message</p>	<p>Wishing everyone an enjoyable, refreshing and safe summer! Rafael Brand Congregation President</p>
<p>Noteworthy Congregational News</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We mourn the loss of Rosalind (Roz) Kamerman, most recently of Ann Arbor, Michigan, on May 31, 2004. Roz and her husband Lou, along with Sarah Lee and Julius Margolis, were the elders and foundation of our congregation

beginning in the 1960's. Roz's daughter Marlene and son Sidney brought her back to Staunton to be buried beside Lou with a wonderful memorial service.

- Our **Welcome Back picnic** will be held at Happy Hollow beginning at **3:00 on Sunday, August 22nd**. Thanks to Doug and Martha Degen and Lynn Hewitt for inviting us to return to Happy Hollow. Our hosts will provide drinks, paper products, dessert and a gas grill for folks wanting to cook out. Please bring any or all of the following suggested items: bathing suits and towels, kayaks, water toys, fishing pole, bug spray, lawn chairs, hiking boots, musical instruments AND a dish to share:

Last names beginning with A-L
main dish

Last names beginning with M-Z
vegetable side dish or salad

Please do NOT bring your dog(s)!

Directions: I-64 east to the Sherando Lake/Lyndhurst exit. Turn right onto Route 664/South Delphine toward Sherando. Travel 3.4 miles passing the Lyndhurst Post Office. (South Delphine turns into Mt. Torrey Rd.) Turn left at the Wilson Volunteer Fire Dept. – a large blue building – onto Mountain Side Lane. Mt. Side Lane is a gravel road winding through the farm and over a plank bridge. After the bridge, bear right and follow the gravel road past more fields. You will come to a gate and a wooden sign that says Happy Hollow. Continue winding on the road through the woods and over the dam. Park your car at the lake on your left or at the top of the hill (stay right) next to the lodge. The lodge has restrooms to shower and change. Call 540-943-6875 if you get lost.

- An end of the year note to congratulate all our B'nai Mitzvah students with a sincere thank you to each of them and their families for the marvelous mitzvah projects they created. Philip Chodrow's volunteer work with the SPCA so that animals were more socialized (and therefore more adoptable) was wonderful. In addition, Philip made a donation to the Heifer Project; Ben Goldsmith's "adopt a grandfather" brought tears to the eyes of many who heard about it and made us all realize how much each of us can give and receive; Jordan Kristoff's biblical garden will be enjoyed by all who enter the sanctuary for many years to come; Ian Jordan's offer to collect unwanted items from his area and bring them to others who were in need was outstanding. They were all excellent projects – reaching beyond our tiny Jewish community. Mazel tov!
- Congratulations to Ruth Chodrow who has been appointed to serve on the Board of Directors for the Mid-Atlantic Council of the Union for Reform Judaism. She will be inducted at the biennial meeting in October, 2004.
- Thanks to Byron Grove-Humphries was making the roof repairs to the cemetery building.
- The next **Temple board meeting** will be Thursday, **August 26th at 7:00 pm** in the temple social hall. Everyone is welcome to attend.

News of our Community

- Debby Bishop's new address is: 3521 Manford Drive, Durham, NC 27707 and she can be reached at her new e-mail: debbybishop@earthlink.net.
- Alan Goldenberg has recovered from his second knee surgery and has resumed his travels between Marco Island, Figure Eight Island and his grandchildren. We still can't keep track of him... or Vicki!
- Nancy Witt is doing much better! She's putting her limited energy toward seeing clients on her regular schedule, but that's the extent of her abilities right

	<p>now. Your cards and calls are welcome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doctors are pleased with Mike Brown’s acceptance of his new liver! The transplant, using Mike’s sister Connie’s liver, was completed on June 24. All is progressing well with Connie’s discharge from the hospital June 29 and Mike healing slowly and, as he can, reducing the number of medications needed. In the meantime, Sam is being spoiled by Bonnie’s parents and sister in the DC area. You can reach the Brown’s at: Gift of Life Transplant House, 705 Second Street, SW, Rochester, MN 55902, room 50.
<p>News from the Women’s Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’re planning a yard sale in October – so stash those treasures out of the way for just a little bit longer and we’ll sell them in the fall.... • We’d like to say HAPPY BIRTHDAY to the all of the known July and August birthdays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marcia Conner celebrating on July 2nd Kate Goldenberg on the 3rd Twins Benjamin and Sydney Fox on the 6th Sarah Young on the 10th Byron Grove-Humphries on the 14th Lynn Landsberg on the 21st Lillian Blair on August 6th Jonathan Freedman on August 10th Stephanie Brand on August 11th AJ Hartung on August 13th Joe Kristoff also on August 13th <p>And HAPPY ANNIVERSARY to: Doug and Martha Degen on July 30th</p>
<p>Religious School</p>	<p>Ellen DeFriece and Margee Greenfield are planning for the coming year at religious school and considering new options. One of those options is the possibility of a Sunday morning pre-school program (from 10:30-12:30) with age appropriate Jewish songs, games and stories. They are looking at children who are potty-trained up to Kitah Aleph age (kindergarten), but need to assess the interest in such a program. If you are interested in possibly including a child/children in this program, please email Margee asap at az2va@aol.com with the number of children and their ages. Also if you are interested in teaching this age group, please let Margee know.</p>
<p>Staunton Book Group</p>	<p>Our first discussion was held by a lively group of 10 people. Come join us on Thursday, July 29th at 7:30 at the Hartung’s house to discuss <u>Dead Sea Scrolls Deception</u>, by Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh. To reach the Hartungs, follow 250 (Churchville Road) almost to Churchville. Cross the Middle River bridge at the bottom of the hill and turn right onto Hanger’s Mill Road. Go 4/10 of a mile and turn right into the driveway marked “Five Thorns”. AJ promises that the dogs will be under control and confined to their own quarters. For more information, please contact A.J. at 337-6836</p>
<p>Judaica Shop</p>	<p>Check out our many gift items in stock and peruse the many Judaica catalogs available. There’s a lot to choose from! Please let Dianne Mason know of any items that you would like stocked. Dianne can be reached at 885-6254.</p>

AUGUST	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 Picnic at Happy Hollow 3:00 pm	23	24	25	26 Board meeting at 7 pm	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3 Shabbat services at 7:00	

August 22	Potluck Picnic at Happy Hollow beginning at 3:00 pm
August 26	7:00 pm Temple Board Meeting
Sept. 3	Shabbat Services at 7:00 pm