

March 2018/5778

## Congregation Etz Chaim

From Shabbat services: Saturday, February 17:  
President David Strassler speaks from the heart:

“It is not often that I am moved to speak personally at one of our services. But today is one of those days.

I sent out an email earlier this week to try to make a minyan today, so Beth would be able to chant Torah. Our community has decided to support her to lead services, but the biggest support is showing up. Without 10 people, we are not able to take out the Torah. Without 10, Barbara does not have the honor of serving as gabbai while the Torah is read. Without 10, we are not able to say the Amidah, which deprives Mort the ability to lead the Musaf Amidah. Jack prepares a teaching of this week’s Torah reading, and always appreciates a crowd.

Having a minyan enables our Bat and Bar Mitzvah students to learn about the entire service. And lastly, and most importantly to me, having a minyan enables someone who would like to say Kaddish, the prayer on the anniversary of a loved one’s death, to be able to do so. I would like to thank you all for being here today to enable us all to do what we love to do.”

Eighteen showed up at the February 17th service. We were able to do a full service. A Bat Mitzvah student was present to learn. Jack was able to share his knowledge with a good crowd. And a member was able to say Kaddish.

Please try to make some space in your busy lives to slow down and join us for one of our services in April and May:

- . Friday, April 6 at 7 pm
- . Saturday, April 14th at 9:30 am: Elaina Hammond will become a bat mitzvah.
- . Friday, May 4th at 7 pm
- . Saturday, May 19th at 9:30 am

Todah Rabah,  
David

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### A Note from the Board

## HAPPY PASSOVER

The Board of Directors would like to wish you and your family a very Happy Passover.

## Walking Down Memory Lane

as told by Melinda (Simensky) Whitman to David Strassler



Melinda's father, Jack Simensky, passed away on January 25, 2018, at 88 years old, in the presence of his loving wife Carol, after being married 58 years. The following are some memories Melinda has of her father and growing up Jewish in Biddeford:

"My father was not a religious man, but he was socially Jewish. I remember accompanying him to many minyans over the years so congregants could say Kaddish for Yahrzeit over loved ones when I was a little girl. We needed 10 for a minyan. He never turned down the chance to go. He would say to me, 'you never know when you will need someone there for you.'" Also, it's a Mitzvah.

One time, Beryl Weinstein said to me, 'When you turn 13 and become a Bat Mitzvah, you too will be counted.' I went to Hebrew School at Temple Beth El (in Portland) since we didn't have one in at Congregation Etz Chaim; no one to teach us and not enough kids. I remember carpooling with Michael and Steven Simensky, Judy Nathanson, Peter Feinberg,. I didn't feel out of place in Portland, since so many of my cousins and friends lived there.

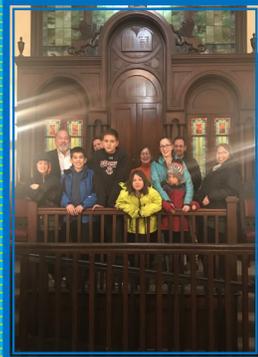
For my Bat Mitzvah, I was tutored by Cantor Messerschmidt. The Bat Mitzvah was held on Sunday, Mother's Day. After that, I continued to go to Beth El, belonging to the USY (United Synagogue Youth Group).

Afterwards, I went to help make a minyan and Beryl informed me that since I was a girl, I couldn't be counted. That was the way it was at Congregation Etz Chaim in those days.

When I went to shul in Biddeford, my father would remind me that his father, Meyer Simensky, would sit proudly on one of the chairs on the bimah. Like so many others in the community, he had immigrated to America from his homeland of Warsaw, Poland. I never learned why he got that honor, to sit in that chair, but he was one of the founders of Congregation Etz Chaim. I never got to meet him, since he died when my father was 21 years old. I was named after him, in the Jewish tradition."

I also have fond memories of Jack, and his wife Carol at our synagogue. They date back over the past 30+ years, as they welcomed Beth and me to the community for High Holiday services, welcomed my in-laws to our Friday night pot lucks and they helped us make a minyan on Saturday mornings. They shared with us the memories of the "good old days". They are both missed. Carol has now moved to Massachusetts to be closer to her daughter. And may Jack rest in peace.

## 2018 Purim Party Pics!!!





### The Arnold Shapiro Community Service Award

The Arnold Shapiro Community Service Award was created to honor Arnold Shapiro's commitment and service to Congregation Etz Chaim. Arnold Shapiro was raised in Biddeford and attended Hebrew School at Congregation Etz Chaim. He celebrated his Bar Mitzvah in 1944. In 1980, Arnold Shapiro became the president of Congregation Etz Chaim, at a time when other Board members wanted to close the synagogue due to a lack of membership. He spent countless hours at Congregation Etz Chaim doing everything from organizing High Holiday Services to attending Bar and Bat Mitzvah services to recruiting volunteers to supervising building repairs. For over 30 years, Arnold Shapiro unselfishly guided the congregation to the vibrant community it is today.

Goal: A scholarship will be provided to a member of Congregation Etz Chaim who is a graduating high school senior, to support their post-secondary study in college, professional or trade school, or other post-secondary training or opportunities.

Amount: \$500-\$1,000.

When: The scholarship will be awarded annually in June. Please submit your application by May 15, 2018.

Eligibility: Graduating high school seniors who have been actively involved in providing service to the Congregation Etz Chaim community.

How: To fill out the application, go the web site: <http://etzchaimme.org/highschoolaward/>

All nominations will be reviewed and the recipient will be chosen by a committee comprised of the President of the Etz Chaim Board of Directors, one Board member, and an Education Committee member. The Scholarship is supported by the Shapiro Family.

### Temple Model Seder





## ***Dr. Morton Gold Installment, Part III***

As documented by *Cantor Beth Strassler*



### **In the last episode of this series, I wrote:**

*Nine years ago, Dr. Morton Gold joined the minyan at Congregation Etz Chaim on Bacon Street in Biddeford, ME. He became one of our Shabbat regulars. As I became acquainted with Dr. Gold, I learned that he has composed Jewish liturgical music for the majority of his 84 years.*

*I have since sung several of his solo vocal compositions in synagogue and at recitals. The music is inspirational in a way that I have not experienced in other contemporary composers. As I became more and more immersed in its sounds, I became intrigued with how this composer's life events have shaped his music.*

*My thesis for partial fulfillment of my Master of Arts degree in Jewish Studies chronicles Dr. Gold's eighty-four years of life and sixty-six years of composing. It identifies the musical influences in his formative years and their specific impact on his later compositions.*

*My last newsletter article was: **The Later Formative Years: 1947-1960 in Boston***

I will now pick up where I left off: ***The Nasson College and Family Years: 1962-1982***

Dr. Gold earned the privilege to wear a graduation gown with velvet on the sleeves for his doctoral degree in 1960, as his mother had requested. He saw the achievement as his ticket to teach music in a university. He soon received a full-time appointment, as a music faculty member, at Nasson College in Springvale, ME in 1964.

Morton and Esther Miriam Morse, from Pawtucket, Rhode Island were married in 1962. He had met Esther shortly after moving to Providence, when she came with her parents to a lecture he was presenting about an upcoming concert. They married in 1962. In 1963, their first daughter, Sara Naomi, was born.

Dr. Gold began his tenure at Nasson in his new role of provider for his family. Morton and Esther welcomed two more children into the world while he was at Nasson: their son, Tsvi, in 1968, and another daughter, Beth, in 1974.

Dr. Gold considered teaching his primary profession, and composing a side job. He did well at Nasson, moving from Assistant Professor to Full Professor of Music. Besides his teaching responsibilities, he conducted the choral and wind ensembles. He also kept busy with his side job.

His daughter Beth remembers her father's music in their house:

“...When I was really little, they would put me down for a nap and I would go to sleep on the floor so I could listen to him playing the piano...I remember doing that all the time. Crawl out of bed and lay on the floor, because the piano was right below where I was..... Those are just some memories when I think.... that's how I know him.”

## ***Dr. Morton Gold Installment, Part III, cont.***

As documented by *Cantor Beth Strassler*



*While he was working on his orchestrations, hunched over a desk for hours with a bright overhead light, little Beth would tiptoe into the room:*

*“Sometimes I would hang out with him, ..... Sometimes, I would turn pages for him [while he played piano].”*

*Her big sister, Sara, remembers their father’s absent-minded humming throughout the house while he was composing. When she went to his next concert, she would be amazed to hear the humming woven into a beautiful piece of accompaniment.*

### **“The First Time I saw Myself as a Jewish Music Composer”**

Cantor Harold Lerner was the cantor at Temple Adath Jeshurun in Syracuse, NY. He had kept in touch with the Gold family over the years. In 1971, he performed Dr. Gold’s *A Sabbath Evening Sacred Service* in Syracuse.

Cantor Lerner discussed subjects for a newly commissioned work from Dr. Gold. They agreed that Passover would be the subject. Cantor Lerner wrote the words, sent them to Dr. Gold, and agreed to employ a “chamber orchestra of no less than 21 musicians”, as directed by Dr. Gold. With all of this in place, he encouraged Dr. Gold to “go where his inspiration led”. Dr. Gold composed the work while on sabbatical in the spring semester of 1972. The result was *Haggadah: A Search for Freedom*, Opus 28 (1972), an oratorio with Tenor solo, Narrator, Mixed Chorus, Children’s Chorus and Chamber Orchestra. The premiere was held on two successive evenings at Temple Adathin in Syracuse, NY. The piece was warmly received.

*Haggadah* was performed numerous times in several places, including the New York State Fair in Syracuse, NY (1974), the Cantors’ Assembly Convention (1974), and Temple Israel in Boston (1982). It was also recorded by New Jersey Public Television (1975), and broadcast nationally preceding the Passover holiday, for several years.

Somewhere between the completion of *Haggadah* and its many performances was a turning point for Dr. Gold. Before *Haggadah*, he had considered himself simply as a composer. But after *Haggadah* was brought into the world, he forever after considered himself a Jewish composer.

When Dr. Gold looked back at his earlier compositions (opuses 1 through 27 over twenty years) with this new lens, he found cantorial-like motifs, tonalities that imitated the sounds of Jewish prayer, or pieces of popular synagogue tunes throughout his work. He came to realize this music as an intricate part of “who he is.” Therefore, when he follows wherever the music leads him, Jewish musical elements emerge as he expresses himself.

Up to that point, in 1972, he had not written much choral music. “I had a few pieces, yes, but nothing extended or significant. The only significant vocal piece I wrote was the setting of *Psalm 98*, Opus 11 (1958).”





## *Pampered Chef Fundraiser!*

by Leah Macomber

It was rescheduled twice because of snow storms, but when it finally happened, it was a blast!

On March 20, Etz Chaim hosted a Pampered Chef Party, where Etz Chaim members and friends gathered to talk, laugh, and cook some great food with some great kitchen products. We used a spiralizer gadget that turned carrots and zucchini into fancy spirals, a can opener that creates no sharp edges, and a new stainless steel, non-stick pan to make a delicious, spicy middle-eastern egg dish called shashuka!

Then we used a very handy food chopper on apples and walnuts, to make a fine and trouble-free charoset. The food was great and the company was delightful.

During the evening, participants had the opportunity to make purchases, but since Pampered Chef has an online catalog, most people purchased online. In fact, the **Pampered Chef party will be open until April 10<sup>th</sup>**.

To purchase Pampered Chef products (15% of all purchases go to Etz Chaim), click the link below, log on, shop and wait for your Pampered Chef delivery direct to your home:

<https://www.pamperedchef.com/pws/jsherman/guest-landing/9127609941147>.

Thank you!



## *SBC Western Wall Reflection*

By Sarah Beth Campisi

Growing up attending Congregation Etz Chaim, my parents and teachers would tell me that Israel was our homeland. It was silly to me; how could a country over 5,000 miles away that most people I knew had never visited, be our home? I understood the concept, but never guessed that I'd ever fully understand it.

In the fall of 2017, I decided to apply to go on Hillel's Birthright trip. I remember filling out the online application and thinking that a free trip to Israel was the exotic vacation my senior year of college needed. I could have easily guessed that visiting Israel would have an impact on me, but I never would have believed that I'd be so moved by the visit to the Western Wall.

The women's section of the Western Wall is much smaller than the men's side, and therefore more crowded. The base of the wall offered no free space for me to approach it, and so my first focus was only on getting close. It surprised me how quickly I managed to find a way through, like there was some force pulling me forward and forcing me between the shoulders of two older women. I pulled a piece of paper out of my pocket, a prayer I had written on the bus earlier that day. I put my hand on the Wall and began to pray. The Wall was surprisingly smooth and cool against my palm.

My other hand shook with my prayer in my hand as I read it under my breath. I began to cry. I sang the Mishebarach for my family and loved ones who needed it. I whispered every Hebrew prayer I could possibly remember. The entire time, I was crying, tears streaming down my face and my breath catching in a way I could not control, so I did not try.

I opened my eyes and looked up to where the Wall met the darkening blue sky. A few birds were nesting in the brambles and brush in the Wall. As I looked up, a small rock was unsettled from the nest, fell, and tapped against the frame of my glasses. I do not know what this meant, but I like to think it meant that G-d was listening.

I pressed my nose and forehead against the wall. I focused on the center of my forehead and where it connected to the Wall, and for a moment, there was nothing in my head but silence. Slowly, the world around me came back into focus; young boys were chanting Hebrew in the men's section, the whispered prayers of women around me, the sound of Dasha, one of my Birthright friends, sniffing only a few feet away from me.

Silently, I thanked G-d for getting me there, for giving me the opportunity to pray at the Wall as a Jew--like so many who came before me--for giving Jerusalem back to the Jews, and for helping my loved ones get where they are today.

By the time I opened my eyes again, it had grown dark. I knew I was late meeting the group. Dasha, was still standing next to me. I took her hand and we gathered ourselves for a moment before backing away from the Wall, a sign of respect. As I suspected, our group was already gathered and had been waiting an extra 20 minutes for us. Unlike the rest of the trip when our tour guide would be angry at those who were late, he smiled at us and asked us how it was. We both still had tears running down our cheeks.

Our small group that had become so close in only a matter of days, huddled together and held onto one another, just taking in the moment. I could not get my heart to stop pounding or my tears to stop flowing, but I was not sad. I had never experienced a more overwhelming feeling of safety, of being home.

## The ABCs Of Using Your Retirement Account For Charitable Giving

Article from Forbes May 17, 2017

By Kate Stalter, Contributor

One of our firm’s clients is a husband and wife named Bonnie and Clyde. Really, those are their actual names.

Bonnie and Clyde - or B&C, for short - are very generous people and recently came into the office to discuss charitable giving. Part of that conversation revolved around a strategy for the couple’s Required Minimum Distributions, their RMDs, from their qualified retirement accounts.

As it happens, there are ways to use what’s called a Qualified Charitable Deduction (QCD) to lower Adjusted Gross Income (AGI). Kim Laughton, President of Schwab Charitable, says that retirees over the age of 70-and-a-half who “don’t need that distribution, if they have means outside of their IRA to be funding their life and don’t want to take the distribution and be taxed on it ... have the option of donating up to \$100,000 of that distribution to a charity.”

The rules regarding an RMD out of an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) were established in 1974 with the enactment of the [Employee Retirement Income Security Act](#) (ERISA). ERISA defined penalty-free distributions as going into effect the year a taxpayer reached age 70-and-a-half. The specific rules regarding penalty-free distributions and RMDs have been tweaked in a number of tax bills since then. And, the [IRS rule](#) that allows a taxpayer to use his or her IRA to make a QCD dates back to 2006 when it was included as a temporary provision that kept getting extended. The QCD became a permanent part of the tax code in 2015.

The owners of IRAs who reach the age when they are required to take mandatory distributions can now give the money to a charity. That means those RMDs would be excluded from the taxpayer’s adjusted gross income.

So, that’s a brief history of the QCD and the RMD. Now, let’s talk about the opportunity for seniors who, like B&C, have eleemosynary intent. B&C are in their mid-70s. They are both retired professionals. Each receives Social Security, so they are automatically eligible for Medicare, which they opt into.

Both have IRA Rollovers from previous employers and Clyde has a pension from former employer’s Profit Sharing Plan. Their taxable investment portfolio produces both interest and dividend income for them. Here’s a snapshot of what that looks like for 2017.

	Investment Account Balance	RMD For 2017	Company Pension	Interest Income	Dividend Income	Social Security Benefits	Adjusted Gross Income
Bonnie IRA	1,070,439.00	46,744.06				28,308.00	
Clyde IRA	872,958.00	36,678.91	68,350.00			28,308.00	
Taxable Portfolio	978,242.00			12,625.00	10,455.00		
	<b>2,921,639.00</b>	<b>83,422.97</b>	<b>68,350.00</b>	<b>12,625.00</b>	<b>10,455.00</b>	<b>56,616.00</b>	<b>231,468.97</b>

Using the formula shown in the image below provided by the [IRS](#), and assuming no other variables, B&C’s 2017 income tax bill would come to \$51,695.81 based on their combined AGI of \$231,468.97. The reality is that B&C would likely be able to mitigate some of that tax burden, but we’ll use this number just for illustrative purposes.

Schedule Y-1— Use if your 2017 filing status is Married filing jointly or Qualifying widow(er)				
If line 5 is:		The tax is:		
Over—	But not over—			of the amount over—
\$0	\$18,650		10.0%	\$0
18,650	75,900	\$1,865.00	+ 15.0%	18,650
75,900	153,100	10,452.50	+ 25.0%	75,900
153,100	233,350	29,752.50	+ 28.0%	153,100
233,350	416,700	52,222.50	+ 33.0%	233,350
416,700	470,700	112,728.00	+ 35.0%	416,700
470,700	-----	131,628.00	+ 39.6%	470,700

***The ABCs Of Using Your Retirement Account For Charitable Giving, cont.***

Article from Forbes May 17, 2017

By Kate Stalter, Contributor

According to Laughton, “Donating publicly traded stock, real estate and other appreciated assets that have been held a year or more is the most tax effective way to give. In addition to allowing donors to take a current year tax deduction, they can generally avoid paying capital gains tax on the sale of the asset. This can allow them to give up to 20% more to their favorite charities and pay less in taxes.”

In B&C’s case, doing this would lower their overall tax bill, but it wouldn’t do anything to help them avoid paying income tax on 85% of their Social Security benefits. What’s more, making an after-tax charitable donation won’t do anything to help them avoid the surcharge on their Medicare premiums.

The resulting decrease in the value of their taxable investment portfolio would, however, lower their taxable income in 2018. If they took (just to make the numbers fair) an amount equal to their RMD out of their taxable portfolio, then next year’s income would decrease by something close to 8.5%. Using the same proportional interest and dividend income as portrayed in the AGI calculation above we arrive at the following numbers.

<b>Investment Account Balance</b>	<b>Interest Income</b>	<b>Dividend Income</b>
894,819.03	11,548.36	9,563.41

But, what if B&C donated their RMD to a qualified 501(c)3 organization in the form of a qualified charitable distribution? Right off the bat, their adjusted gross income would be reduced. It goes from of \$231,468.97 to \$148,046.00. Here’s how we arrive at that.

	<b>Investment Account Balance</b>	<b>RMD Used As QCD For 2017</b>	<b>Company Pension</b>	<b>Interest Income</b>	<b>Dividend Income</b>	<b>Social Security Benefits</b>	<b>Adjusted Gross Income</b>
Bonnie IRA	1,070,439.00	46,744.06				28,308.00	
Clyde IRA	872,958.00	36,678.91	68,350.00			28,308.00	
Taxable Portfolio	978,242.00			12,625.00	10,455.00		
	<b>2,921,639.00</b>		<b>68,350.00</b>	<b>12,625.00</b>	<b>10,455.00</b>	<b>56,616.00</b>	<b>148,046.00</b>

Doing this is beneficial to the couple in another important way. By lowering their AGI they now avoid the income surcharge on their Medicare Parts B & D premiums. And, this saves them more than \$2,000 annually.

The RMD must go to a qualified 501(c)3 organization. Funds can’t be transferred to a Donor Advised Fund or a Supporting Org at a local [Community Foundation](#) or broker-sponsored charitable gift fund.

When B&C use their RMDs as QCDs they can’t then claim the amount as a charitable donation as one of their itemized deductions. And, importantly, they will need to get the process started well in advance of year end. In general, you want to have enough time to allow your IRA custodian to make the transfer and confirm its receipt by the charity before December 31<sup>st</sup>. So, depending on how much experience a custodian has with the process, investors are encouraged to get the process started as early as late in the calendar third quarter, just to be safe.

## *The ABCs Of Using Your Retirement Account For Charitable Giving, cont.*

Article from Forbes May 17, 2017

By Kate Stalter, Contributor

Also, there are a couple of other issues that B&C will face based on that AGI.

The first is that the Social Security Administration tells us that 85% of B&C's Social Security benefits will be taxable to them. The second is that they will also face a surcharge on their [Medicare Part B](#) and [Medicare Part D](#) premiums.

Now in fairness, B&C can lower their AGI if they make a charitable contribution with after-tax dollars. They could, for example, write a check to a charity or donate appreciated assets from their taxable investment portfolio to a qualified 501(c)3 organization.

Unfortunately, their income is still so high that 85% of their Social Security benefits are still taxed at their marginal rate. Using the formula in the image above of Schedule Y-1 from IRS Publication 505 we see that B&C's tax bill decreases from \$51,695.81 to just \$28,489.00. And, again, there would likely be ways for them to lower their tax bill further, but our focus here is to specifically point out the benefit of using their RMD as a QCD to lower their AGI...which is meaningful. But, the process has to be handled with careful planning. [IRS rules](#) apply.

The first rule, as Kim Laughton noted above, is that the amount of the QCD is limited to \$100,000 in a given year. And, the RMD must go directly from their IRAs' custodian to the charity for it to qualify. B&C cannot take the distribution in cash and then write a check. If they do, then they will be taxed on the distribution and will still be subject to the Medicare premium surcharges. And, a portion of their Social Security benefits will still be taxed.

Link to "*The ABCs of Using your Retirement Account for Charitable Giving*" article:  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/katestalter/2017/05/17/the-abcs-of-using-your-retirement-account-for-charitable-giving/2/#2f73b6b7617a>

## York County Hebrew School Report

By Jeff Levy

There is a wonderful community this year at Hebrew School at Etz Chaim. We are led by Cantor Beth Strassler, who is assisted by Leah Macomber, Ethan Davis, Denise Hammond and me, Jeff Levy. The teen class is taught by David Strassler.

The unique curriculum has allowed for a wide variety of Jewish learning. Students are taught Hebrew, Jewish Values, and each week Cantor Strassler leads the group in a Torah lesson, typically accompanied by a craft.

The school year started with our students performing Tikun Olam, by collecting relief supplies for the hurricane victims in Puerto Rico. Additionally, students have learned about Jewish holidays and celebrated them together. We have participated in exciting community activities, and we recently visited the Maine Jewish Museum, located at Etz Chaim synagogue in Portland. Our Hebrew School students also traveled to the Maine Jewish Alliance to celebrate Purim at party sponsored by the Chabad of Maine. We just hosted our community Model Seder on March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

This year has been an exciting one at the York County Hebrew School, with much more to come. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Cantor Strassler at [cantorstrassler@gmail.com](mailto:cantorstrassler@gmail.com)

## *Samuel Osher Memorial Library Receives Substantial Grant*

By Maureen King

The Samuel Osher Memorial Library at Congregation Etz Chaim has received a \$20,100 grant from The Mary L. and William J. Osher Foundation to automate circulation, and improve the collection's accessibility to the public.

The grant will help the Library gain a wider audience, in both the congregation and the larger York County community, by providing Internet access to the collection, and extending library hours. Library Director Maureen King has begun the groundwork for implementing the project, including a review of the entire collection to ensure all current record holdings are accurate. Subsequent steps will include contracting with a provider of cloud-based library services and preparing the collection for bar-code scanning circulation methods. Community volunteers will be welcomed throughout the process, and tasks will vary from re-shelving books to data-entry to bar-coding books and more.

The Samuel Osher Memorial Library was founded in 1998 in collaboration with the York County Jewish Community Council, with a mission to provide access to Jewish books, music, videos, and educational materials for Congregation Etz Chaim members. The Library was named for Samuel Osher, who died of liver cancer at age 43. Sam was a generous member who continuously supported the synagogue's growth. His wife, Paula, served as co-chair of the original library committee. In November 1999, the Library opened with about 500 books and videos, in a newly renovated space on the second floor of the 36 Bacon Street synagogue. Through donations and purchases, the Library's collection has grown to approximately 2500 Jewish books, movies, music, and educational materials

Over the past twenty years, the Library has received ongoing support from the Congregation Etz Chaim Board of Directors, and gifts from members and friends of the synagogue. Among the many local organizations that have provided generous contributions are the Ogunquit Summer Congregation, the Leo Lamson Memorial Fund of the Holocaust Human Rights Center of Maine, the Law Offices of Joe Bornstein, and the Sam L. Cohen Foundation.

This most recent award from the Mary L. and William J. Osher Foundation is the second time the Foundation has assisted the Library. The original grant in 2004 enabled the Library to install permanent shelving to hold the expanding collection. Both grants have come at critical points in the Library's growth. Congregation Etz Chaim is very grateful for the continuing support of the Library by the Mary L. and William J. Osher Foundation.

For more information, library hours, or to volunteer, visit [etzchaimme.org/library/](http://etzchaimme.org/library/) or email Library Director Maureen King at [somlibrary@etzchaimme.org](mailto:somlibrary@etzchaimme.org).



## Cantor's Corner

by Cantor Beth Strassler

Reverend Ed Bove realized he was “being called” after he was approached by several of his congregants, one of whom is a high school principal. He was being called to organize an interfaith Peace Vigil to emphasize and celebrate the diversity and commonalities within our community, advocate for peace, and advocate for safety in our schools.

When I received his phone call asking if I would participate, I was working out how to play and sing the prayer *Haskiveinu* with the Matisyahu song, *One Day*. The first is a Friday night prayer for God to watch over us and keep us safe through the night. The second is the most “folksy” song of the former orthodox beat box and reggae singer which envisions a world of no hate, no violence and a life of peace.

My response included “Oh, do I have a song for you! Could I sing it?” His resounding “Yes” reflected how he made room for everyone who felt s/he had something to contribute. The result was a powerful event involving about sixty people at the United Methodist Church in Goodwin Mills, Maine. Several of us sang special songs or played piano music. Some spoke formally, including reading famous quotes about peace, while others spoke from the heart. We listened to the reading of the names of the 17 victims in the Stoneman Douglas shooting in Florida, sang hymns, and quietly reflected. We concluded the vigil by lighting individual candles and singing *Let There be Peace on Earth (and Let it Begin with Me)*.

One of the most passionate speakers of the evening was Kennebunk high school student, Caroline Lowery. She confirmed that her generation has taken up the challenge to lead the charge to make schools safer, but acknowledged that they can't do it alone. For example, during the Maine school walkout yesterday, clergy and counselors stood across the road from the Kennebunk school, not interfering, but readily available should anyone need them. She contends that encouragement and support from the rest of the community is crucial for their success.

By the end, I was profoundly moved. I am exploring how I and our synagogue may continue this work. How do we support the students taking the lead? What will they need from the rest of us? What suggestions do you have? Please share your thoughts or comments with me at [cantor@etzchaimme.org](mailto:cantor@etzchaimme.org).

Pesach Kasher V'Same'ach!!

Wishing you a joyous Passover with family and friends,

Beth



is a new column in the newsletter. Our very own, homegrown Cantor Beth Strassler, intends to share some of her working and musical experiences as she develops her role as cantor and spiritual leader of Congregation Etz Chaim. Please write any comments, suggestions for topics or questions to Beth at [cantor@etzchaimme.org](mailto:cantor@etzchaimme.org).



**Samuel Osher Memorial Library**  
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**York County Community**

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<http://etzchaimme.org>

## *Shabbat Services*

*Join us for Shabbat Services:*

*The first Friday evening, and the  
third Saturday morning of the month*

***Cantor:*** Beth Strassler

## **Board of Directors at Congregation Etz Chaim**

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## **York County (YC) Jewish Community**

This newsletter is published twice each year. It is intended to announce and report on Jewish community events in York County, and especially at Congregation Etz Chaim in Biddeford. It offers local perspectives on historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish life.

Adrienne Levy, Editor & Layout Design Consultants:

Levy family & Board members

[mail@etzchaimme.org](mailto:mail@etzchaimme.org)

If we have your email address, you have been removed from the snail mailing list.

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## Our Synagogue

Our community programs are available to all members of the York County Jewish Community and are driven by the following mission statement:

“We promote Jewish cultural, social, educational and religious activities in southern Maine. Our primary goal is to make available a range of activities that facilitate the expression of what each individual finds valuable in the Jewish experience.

We attempt to accommodate individuals along the entire spectrum of Jewish practice and theology. We value and support the existence of a local formal congregation, but view our community programs as open to all interested people, regardless of whether or to what congregation they may be formally affiliated.”

- . Friday, April 6 at 7 pm
- . Saturday, April 14th at 9:30 am: Elaina Hammond will become a bat mitzvah. “
- . Friday, May 4th at 7 pm
- . Saturday, May 19th at 9:30 am

## Synagogue Contacts

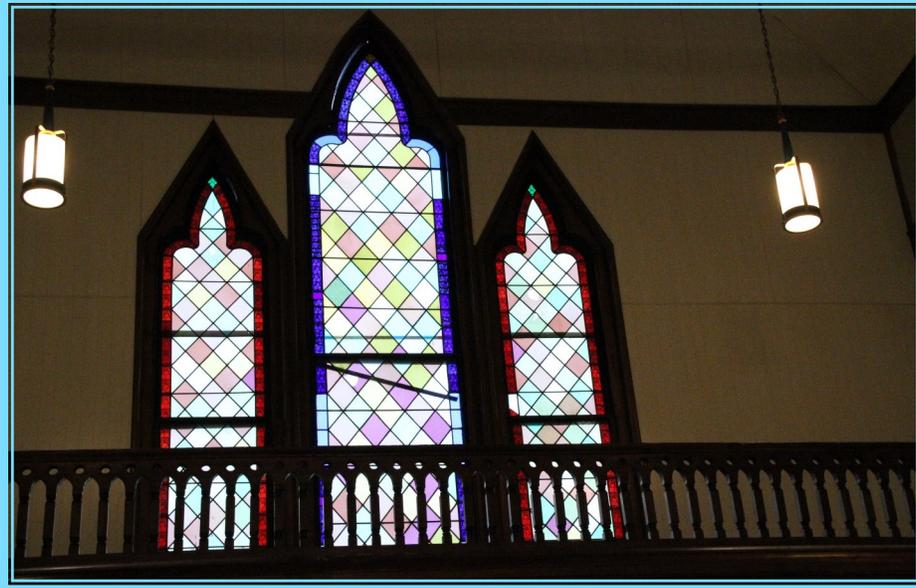
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York County Jewish Community News



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