



Chadashot Ha'am

January 2014

Tevet/Shevat 5774

A Message from Rabbi Saks

Last month, I spent five days in San Diego at the Union for Reform Judaism's Biennial Convention, the largest gathering of Jews in North America. The hundreds of sessions during the five-day convention included topics like best practices, goals, and ideals of synagogue life, Jewish camping and worship. They were led by some of the best minds in Reform Judaism. I want to share some of the highlights of my experience, and I hope that what I gained proves rewarding for you and for our Bet Ha'am community. The experience was incredibly rewarding for me.



The opening plenary session of the Biennial honored leaders and leading organizations in Judaism for their work in making the world a better and brighter place. Among the honorees was Jay Feinberg, founder of Gift of Life Bone Marrow Foundation. With his mother's support, Jay created the foundation to find Jewish bone marrow donors for people with blood cancers, like leukemia, and other blood diseases. Jay is also a leukemia survivor. His efforts have led to an increase in the chances of people of Jewish descent finding a bone marrow donor match from 5% in the early 1990s to over 75% today. Another honoree was David Hartman, of blessed memory, founder of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. The Shalom Hartman Institute is one of the only centers of Jewish learning where Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and secular Jews come together to study.

I had the good fortune to attend invigorating and inspirational sessions

throughout the convention. One of my proudest moments was during a session called *So You Want to Build a Temple Garden*. Rabbi Michael Birnholz of Boca Raton, Florida, has been working hard to create a Biblical garden at his synagogue. During his research for this project he learned about the work of our Garden Committee and our sanctuary garden, raised beds and wheat projects. Our own Toby Rosenberg has been a tremendous resource for Rabbi Birnholz, and his presentation was filled with examples of how

well our garden is working. He also shared ways in which he has involved his religious school students and their families in the gardens at his synagogue; I am hoping his work will help us develop ways to increase our members' involvement with our own gardens at Bet Ha'am.

Later at Biennial, I attended a session with Ron Wolfson, author of *The Spirituality of Welcoming: How to Transform Your Congregation into a Sacred Community* and *Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community*. Ron shared insights on caring communities, including tools and ideas for moving from the notion of a caring committee, where a few members of the congregation attend to the needs of others, to a caring community, where everyone is invested in the emotional and spiritual well-being of everyone else. He emphasized something that we know well but could always improve - that strong synagogues are about people, not programs, and about the relationships we cultivate with one another. I read *Relational Judaism* over the summer and it was

the impetus for the neighborhood meetings we will begin this month to help us to continue to build community within our congregation and to share our Strategic Plan with one another.

There were innovative and dynamic opportunities at Biennial, including workshops on visual worship, where worshippers can set aside their prayer books, allowing them to put their arms around each other or hold their children, or simply become more fully immersed in worship without having to worry about what page the prayer is on. There were concerts with some of the top Jewish musicians of our time, including Shira Kline, who will be our artist-in-residence later this month. (When I mentioned to folks around me that Shira Kline was coming to Bet Ha'am, they were very jealous. It's going to be a weekend not to be missed!) There were meaningful worship services, ranging from *Shabbat minyan* on Thursday morning that combined two of my favorite things: Judaism and yoga. (I picked up a leader's guide; maybe I'll try leading some yoga worship at some point.)

It was a privilege to travel to San Diego and participate in the URJ Biennial - and not just because the temperature was in the high 60s! It was a rewarding and nurturing experience, one that refreshed me, allowed me to connect and reconnect with friends and one that I believe will help enhance my leadership of our congregation. I look forward to sharing what I experienced and learned, and perhaps I can inspire you to join me at the next Biennial in Orlando in November 2015.

President's Message - Lisa Munderback

I participated in the Bernstein Scholar in Residence weekend at the beginning of December, after a week that, for reasons I don't even remember now, left me feeling physically and emotionally exhausted. Friday evening when I came home from work I had a fleeting thought of being a couch potato rather than going to services. I am so glad that I resisted that thought and went.



Dr. Nehemiah Polen, an expert in *Chasidic* thought and storytelling, was the scholar. His enthusiasm for the subject matter was contagious and my spirits began to lift. I wish all of you had experienced it.

His topic on Sunday morning was on how to raise a *mensh*. A *mensh* is a person of integrity and honor. Dr. Polen gave three examples of how we might come to be *mensches*. First we should develop a sense of wonder. Did you know that a total eclipse of the sun is possible because the ratio of the size of the moon and sun is the same as the ratio of the distance between them? How wondrous is that? Is this a coincidence or the work of a Creator? On the other hand, I don't need a solar eclipse to experience wonder. We live in one of the most beautiful places imaginable with ocean, lakes, rivers, mountains and forests all within easy reach. We have music, art and a plethora of good foods. We have our synagogue building, one of the most beautiful in the world. Yet, I admit that sometimes I take these wondrous things for granted. I need to really look and say, "Wow," more often!

Dr. Polen also suggested that we must embrace a tolerance for multiple perspectives. In Hebrew this is *eilu v'eilu*, these and these. It comes from a story in the *Talmud* about an argument that the students of *Shammai* and the students of *Hillel* were having that went on for three years. Finally God had enough and said, "*Eilu v'eilu divray*

Elohim chaim hen," meaning "Both these and these are the words of the living God." There is not Truth; there is truth. As Jews we learn that there are many legitimate perspectives. The trick is to live with the contradictions and not walk away from the community.

His last example was that we should develop gratitude. In our morning prayers we say, "*Modah ani*,"

(Grateful am I) to acknowledge our thanks for waking to a new day. In the Hebrew the word "grateful" comes before the word "I." It's a nice way to set the tone for the day in that it's not all about me. The sense of being grateful takes precedence. It's meant to be a prayer said before one does anything after waking. I try, yet often I'm part way through the morning before the words come. I think that if I say "*Modah ani*," whatever the time of day, I will become more mindful of all the blessings I have.

As we celebrate the secular new year, I hope that my wonder, tolerance and gratitude increase. I wish the same for you.

Chadashot Chai-lights

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Congregation Bet Ha'am

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Office Hours:

Tuesday - Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM
 The office is closed on Mondays.
 Building Use: All meetings, events or gatherings must be scheduled with the office.

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From the Religious School Director

Orly Mendelson Biggie



At Religious School we teach our students to read and chant Hebrew prayers. Being familiar with key words in the prayers helps students better understand each prayer. We also teach some modern Hebrew vocabulary. Modern Hebrew is different from the Biblical or liturgical language. Those who are fluent in Hebrew can usually understand the Bible and prayers, but there are many differences, both grammatically and in the meaning of words. Our students do not have the time to become fluent in modern Hebrew in Religious School but we hope that someday they will - perhaps in college or maybe even in Israel!

Eliezer ben Yehuda was the driving force behind the revival of the Hebrew language at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. Ben Yehuda was born in Russia in 1858 and studied Yiddish and Bible in *cheder*. His parents sent him to *yeshiva* in the hope that he would become a rabbi. While there, Ben Yehuda also learned French, German and Russian and discovered Zionism. He continued his studies at the Sorbonne University in Paris and immigrated to Jerusalem in 1881. His passion as a teacher was to make Hebrew the only spoken language in Israel.

Hebrew had not been spoken for hundreds of years, so Ben Yehuda needed to add many new words. He authored the first modern Hebrew dictionary and established the Committee of the Hebrew Language, known today as the Academy of the Hebrew Language. This organization continues to add new words to the language.

Ben Yehuda's child, Itamar, was the first child to speak only Hebrew. Ben Yehuda's wife was forbidden to speak any other language to Itamar, and he was not allowed to associate with children who spoke other languages. Though Ben Yehuda faced resentment from many groups, his consistency and passion for spoken Hebrew paid off. Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem is named after this amazing man.



Schedule of Services

Friday, January 3

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 4

Torah Study 9:00 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM
Parashat Bo

Friday, January 10

Family Kabbalat Shabbat 6:30 PM

Saturday, January 11

Torah Study 9:00 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM
Parashat B'shalach

Friday, January 17

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 18

Torah Study 9:00 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM
Parashat Yitro

Friday, January 24

Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, January 25

Torah Study 9:00 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM
Parashat Mishpatim

Friday, January 31

Tot Shabbat Service 5:30 PM
Kabbalat Shabbat Service 7:30 PM

Saturday, February 1

Torah Study 9:00 AM
Worship Service 10:00 AM
Parashat T'rumah

Religious School News

Thank you to Trish Wasserman for substitute teaching in December.

The first grade parents program, Praying with your Child, has been rescheduled for Sunday, January 5, at 9:45 AM. Parents will start the morning studying with Rabbi Saks, followed by a joint session with the first graders.

The second grade Family Connection will be on Sunday, January 12, at 9:45 AM. Parents will start the morning studying with Rabbi Saks, followed by a joint session with the second graders.

Seventh grade students will lead the Friday evening worship service on January 24. A *Shabbat* potluck dinner for the students and their families will begin at 6:30 PM. Please RSVP by January 19.

Our *Shabbaton* retreat for seventh through tenth grade students will be on Friday and Saturday, January 10 and 11, at Camp Ketcha in Scarborough. The schedule includes social and educational activities, entertainment and lots of fun. Parents must complete the medical forms that were mailed home before the *Shabbaton*. We still need chaperones for Saturday; can you help?



Strategic Planning Implementation

Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Board of Trustees has initiated a number of steps to begin to implement its recommendations. Please see the Education Task Force article in this newsletter for information about recommendations related to our Religious School. The Board has begun identifying priorities, assessing the feasibility of implementation and setting specific time frames and task assignments in an initial implementation plan. The Board has also identified a liaison team of Board members who will focus on the Action Steps identified in sections of the plan. These include:

Nathan Szanton: Action Steps for 1.1 Fostering Connections within the Bet Ha'am community

Howard Glass: Action Steps for 1.2 Cultivating Community Connections to the broader Jewish community

David Butzel: Action Steps for 1.3 Engaging in *Tikkun Olam*

Mylan Cohen: Action Steps for 2.1 Worship, Prayer and Ritual

Karen Lucas: Action Steps for 3.1 Lifelong Learning

Lee Tabenken: Action Steps for 4.1 House/Garden/Grounds

Julia Bailin: Action Steps for 4.2 Communication and Logistics

Ben Grant: Action Steps for 4.3 Finance

Rabbi Saks, Lisa Munderback, Lisa Pierce and Elaine Falender are also participating on the liaison team to coordinate work amongst the various groups.

The Board liaisons are seeking to identify other congregants and members of the broader community to join work groups for each Action Step area. The Board liaisons will give a preliminary progress report from each work group at the February meeting of the Board of Trustees.

Hundreds of people in the Bet Ha'am community participated in the creation of the Strategic Plan. To successfully implement the Plan, we need to continue to hear the voices and engage the participation of our entire community. If you are interested in joining one of the work groups or if you have questions or ideas to share, please get in touch with the work group Board liaison listed above or any other member of the Board.



Thank you to Sherri Carignan for the gorgeous hand-quilted challah cover that she made and donated to Bet Ha'am. We were delighted to use this for the first time at Rachel Carignan's Bat Mitzvah in December, and we are looking forward to enjoying its beauty for many years to come.

Join our *Tu B'Shevat Seder* at Bet Ha'am!

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

6:30 PM

In Israel, *Tu B'Shevat* is celebrated as an ecological awareness day, and trees are planted in celebration. We will honor the day by planting parsley for future *Pesach seders*.

Rabbi Saks and the Garden Committee invite you to our fun, family-friendly evening to celebrate! The *seder* involves sharing specific fruits, four cups of grape juice or wine and special blessings.

Please bring a vegetarian main dish to share to remind us of our bond with God and the earth.

If you're so inspired, consider a dish that features locally sourced ingredients.



Adult Learning Program **HAVDALAH, MOVIE, and DISCUSSION**

Israel Inside:
How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference
Saturday, January 18
7:00 PM

On Saturday, January 18, join us for a *Havdalah* service and the engaging film, ***Israel Inside: How a Small Nation Makes a Big Difference***. After the movie, Perry Newman will lead a discussion of the film.

Israel Inside is a feature-length documentary that explores the positive characteristics of Israeli society from humanistic, psychological and emotional perspectives. This insightful and uplifting documentary sidesteps the usual conversation about politics, conflict and violence and tells the story of the Israelis, whose resilience has propelled Israel to the forefront of world innovation and progress.

Despite daily challenges ranging from limited resources to security needs, Israeli creativity and inventiveness help make the world a better place. Israel has made significant advancements in the fields of science, environment, medicine and technology, and has shared these developments with the rest of the world.

The film presents a realistic, exciting and forthright view of Israel through the eyes of an Israeli professor and his family who return to Israel after a number of years in the United States. Our discussion of the film will focus on Israel's achievements and challenges - just in time for our congregational trip to Israel in February.

Perry Newman, who will facilitate the discussion, recently became Senior Director, Israel Advocacy, at Combined Jewish Philanthropies in Boston. Perry is also a past winner of the JCA's Joel and Linda Abromson Award, which enabled him to study joint Arab and Jewish technology development in Israel. In addition, Perry received special recognition from the Israeli Consulate in Boston for his efforts to develop economic partnerships between Israel and New England.

Hope House Donations

Hope House provides temporary housing in the Parkside neighborhood of Portland for new arrivals who are seeking asylum. The twelve residents need toiletries and laundry soap. If you can help provide new items to meet their needs, please drop off the following items in the box labeled "HOPE HOUSE".

bath and hand soaps
shower gels
shampoos
toothbrushes
toothpaste
toilet paper
facial tissues
laundry soap

Thank you!

Zecher T'zaddik ***L'vrachah***

- Condolences to Joanie & David Caldwell on the loss of Joanie's father, Julius Hyatt
- Condolences to Alan & Jill Morris on the loss of Alan's mother, Joyce Morris
- Condolences to Kate Stern & Cathy Hayes on the loss of Kate's aunt, Margaret White

School Change Feedback Wanted!

Come join the Religious School Change Task Force on Sunday morning, January 26, from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM and give us feedback on the programming changes that we are considering implementing. We'll provide bagels and coffee – you provide your thoughts and questions!

We will begin with a short presentation and then have opportunities for comments at individual stations. We will be reviewing the following ideas for potential implementation.

What if we had...

- a change in scheduling, so all students in kindergarten through tenth grade meet at the same time, likely Sunday morning?
- a trimester plan where each trimester stands alone and includes a family-based curriculum option choice?
- a mentoring program to match older students with younger students?
- weekend retreats (as we are piloting this year or with modifications as you suggest)?
- mid-week Hebrew instruction for fourth through seventh grade students?
- a credit-based system for older students, with multiple ways to earn credit by engaging in Jewish life within and outside of Religious School?

So, what do you think?

We hope to see you there! Please contact Lisa Pierce, lisa.lisapie@gmail.com, with questions or comments.

This event is open to all current, past and future Religious School families and all interested congregants. Thank you!

Thank you!

Thank you to all who contributed to our successful High Holy Day food drive! Together we raised \$5,263.05 and were able to donate equal amounts of \$1,754.35 to MAZON, South Portland Food Cupboard and The Food Pantry at Jewish Family Services.

MAZON

A Jewish Response
To Hunger

*Dear Rabbi Saks
& Congregants,
Thank you so much for
your recent gift, and
for your long history
of support. Don't
hesitate to call if you
have any questions
about our work.
All the Best,
Peter Gjerset*

Peter Gjerset | DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
pgjerset@mazon.org (424) 208-7205

Holiday Committee

'Twas the Night after Thanksgivikkah

'Twas the night after Thanksgivikkah and at Bet Ha'am, our congregants were gathering to celebrate and savor the third night of our festival lights.

Members and guests came with potluck delights from Thanksgiving leftovers to *challah* and salads. Then it was time to light up the night.

Despite many of our regulars being out of town, other members brought their visiting family and friends, making the evening even more bright.

After a family service and favorite songs, there were more festivities next door. There were *Oneg* and activities for all ages to do what they might.

But none would have been possible without some very special donors, volunteers and staff. They came, rolled up their sleeves and pitched in all right!

Our *Oneg* was sponsored by Rachel Reed and her mother Charlotte Rodetsky, to honor the *yahrzeits* of father and brother - and the memories of their light.

Our celebration would not have been complete without their dedicated feat of making delicious latkes so everyone could enjoy a festive bite.

For those in the mood for something artistic and sweet, Cathy Breen and her daughter Emma helped by decorating cookies to look just right (yum).

Nearby, Susan Paris helped with constructing edible *dreidels* of marshmallows, pretzels and chocolate kisses for another tasty bite.

There was a *dreidel* game table led by

Andrea Krasker Gavin, where spinning tops brought excitement, laughter and smiles bright.

While my original intention was to try my hand at painting little faces, I found myself working with a new young face painter that night.

It was as if to prove what we already know, that volunteers in our congregation come in all ages, sizes and levels of experience and might.

From beginning to end, we had tireless staff coming to our aid with *Maccabian* force, setting-up, decorating and cleaning up for the night.

All in all, our *Chanukah* night will be one to remember as quite a delight!

Much thanks to all! Hope to see you all at our congregational *Tu b'Shevat* seder in January!

If you enjoy holiday celebrations, working with others, potlucks or any of the activities described above, please consider joining the Bet Ha'am Holiday Committee. While our meeting frequency and activity level vary with the holiday cycle, we are always looking for new members and invite anyone interested to get involved. To join or for more information, please email Erin Koepf at erinkoepf@gmail.com or call at 813-810-2858.





Sunday,
February 2
12:30 PM



Live in concert at
Congregation Bet Ha'am!

81 Westbrook Street, South Portland, Maine, www.bethaam.org

Come join the fun as
we welcome award-winning
performer and Jewish
music educator

Shira Kline

and her band for an
afternoon of high-energy
super-fun live music!

Tickets:

\$10 per person

\$25 per family

Call 879-0028 for tickets
or more information!

Join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We invite you to join the Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery today! We have many needs and many ways for you to contribute. If you have an event you would like to celebrate, a person you would like to honor, a *yahrzeit* to remember, or you just want to help support our programs, please fill out the form and send it along with your check to Bet Ha'am. Include an address if you would like an acknowledgement to be sent.

Our Donor Gallery listing should read:

Please acknowledge to: _____

Your name: _____

Check enclosed for \$ _____

Fund choice (please check one):

- _____ Annual Fund
- _____ General Fund
- _____ Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- _____ Adult Library Fund
- _____ Rabbi Berkowitz Open Door Fund
- _____ Building Capital Campaign
- _____ Rabbi Cohen Fund for Worship & Learning
- _____ Rabbi Goldfinger Fund for Israel Travel
- _____ Lehman Fund for Gardens & Grounds
- _____ Religious School Library Fund
- _____ Rosalyne S. & Sumner T. Bernstein Scholar in Residence Fund
- _____ Rabbi Sandmel Education Fund
- _____ Tutor Fund
- _____ Youth Fund

Bet Ha'am Donor Gallery

We thank our generous contributors

Annual Fund

- In honor of the wedding of Lisa Munderback & Susan Paris by Julie Munderback
- Sherrie Bergman & Donald Quaid
- Orly Biggie
- Elizabeth Bucshbaum
- Jon Rotenberg
- Marcy Black
- Jill & Michael Epstein
- Paul Rothman
- Jerry Olshan & Lynn Urbach
- Larry Landau
- Mark & Deborah Tillman Stone
- In memory of Gisele & Leopold Kohn by Howard & Patricia Fortula-Kohn

Capital Fund

- In memory of Leon Goldberg on his *yahrzeit* by Eileen Kalikow

General Fund

- In appreciation of the Caring Committee by Gail Kass, Susan Horowitz & Rose Kass Horowitz
- In honor of the Iris family by Mel & Wendy Bloomstein
- Wishing all our Religious School a happy *Chanukah* by anonymous
- In honor of Emily Brocks on becoming *Bat Mitzvah* by Larry Landau
- Mark & Deborah Tillman Stone
- In honor of Susan McMillan on her conversion by Russ & Lisa Pierce

- In honor of Becca Brocks on her conversion by Russ & Lisa Pierce
- In honor of the Szanton family by Prudence Steiner
- In appreciation of High Holy Day services by Nancy & Ken Levinsky
- In memory of Kate's aunt, Margaret White, by Kate Stern & Cathy Hayes
- In memory of my parents, Davida & Raymond, on their *yahrzeits* by Randi Gelfman
- In memory of Joanie Caldwell's father, Julius Hyatt, by Orly Biggie

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

- In memory of Marilyn Kass by Gail Kass, Susan Horowitz, and Rose Kass Horowitz
- In appreciation of services by Barbara Cowan

Religious School Library Fund

- In memory of Jessica Meyers by Daria Rosen

Youth Fund

- In honor of Rachel Carignan becoming *Bat Mitzvah* by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle
- In memory of Joanie Caldwell's father by Jeremy Moser & Laura Kittle

January 2014

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

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|---|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| | | | 1 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM New Year's Day Office Closed | 2 | 3 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM | 4 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM |
| 5 Religious School Grades 1-6 9:00 AM Kindergarten 9:00 AM Grade 1 Family Program 9:45 AM <i>Shalom Yeladim</i> 11:00 AM Grades 7-10 5:00 PM | 6 Office Closed | 7 | 8 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Education Committee 6:30 PM Introduction to Judaism 7:00 PM | 9 Adult Learning Committee 6:30 PM | 10 Family <i>Kabbalat</i> <i>Shabbat</i> 6:30 PM Grade 7-10 <i>Shabbaton</i> at Camp Ketcha 5:00 PM | 11 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Grade 7-10 <i>Shabbaton</i> at Camp Ketcha |
| 12 Religious School Grades 1-6 9:00 AM Grade 2 Family Program 9:30 AM Social Action Committee 10:00 AM | 13 Office Closed | 14 Finance Committee 4:30 PM Executive Committee 5:30 PM | 15 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM <i>Tu B'Shevat Seder</i> 6:30 PM | 16 <i>Tu B'Shevat</i> Israel trip meeting 7:00 PM | 17 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM | 18 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM "Israel Inside" Film and Discussion with <i>Havdalah</i> 7:00 PM |
| 19 Religious School Grades 1-6 9:00 AM Kindergarten 9:00 AM Grades 7-10 5:00 PM | 20 Office Closed | 21 Garden Committee 5:30 PM Board Meeting 6:30 PM | 22 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Introduction to Judaism 7:00 PM | 23 Library Committee 10:30 AM | 24 <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Service 7:30 PM Grade 7 <i>Shabbat</i> Dinner 6:30 PM Nominating Committee 12:00 PM | 25 Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM |
| 26 Religious School Grades 1-6 9:00 AM Religious School Change Initiatives Brunch 11:30 AM Israel trip meeting 1:00 PM Grades 7-10 5:00 PM Grades 11-12 5:00 PM | 27 Office Closed Membership Committee 7:00 PM | 28 | 29 Morning <i>Minyan</i> 7:00 AM Introduction to Judaism 7:00 PM | 30 | 31 Musician-in- Residence Shira Kline Tot <i>Shabbat</i> Service 5:30 PM Potluck <i>Shabbat</i> Dinner 6:15 PM <i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Services 7:30 PM | Feb 1 Musician-in- Residence Shira Kline Torah Study 9:00 AM Worship Service 10:00 AM Lunch and Family Program 12:00 PM Parent/Teacher program 2:00 PM |