

Shir Ami News

The Monthly Newsletter of Congregation Shir Ami
4529 Malabar Avenue, Castro Valley, CA 94546
(call (510) 537-1787 for a recording of upcoming events)

Please visit our website at

www.congshirami.org

Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism Congregations
November, 2008



Nov 2	School – K through Confirmation Sisterhood – Fiddler on the Roof	Dec 5	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Matt Dreffin and 5 th grade – Bnai Mitzvah class
Nov 7-9	Family Shabbaton at Camp Newman – see Bulletin Board message in this bulletin	Dec 6	Havdalah and Israeli Movie – 7 PM
Nov 9	No School	Dec 7	Preschool through Confirmation
Nov 14	Kids Shabbat Service – 6 PM Pot Luck Dinner – 6:45 PM Shabbat Services – 8 PM; led by Matt Dreffin	Dec 10	Adult Ed – 7 PM Book Study Group
Nov 15	Adult Ed – 7 PM	Dec 12	Potluck Dinner – 6:30 PM Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Suzy Stone
Nov 16	School – Preschool through Confirmation	Dec 13	Adult Ed – 3:30 PM
Nov 19	Adult Ed – 7 PM Book Study Group	Dec 14	School – Preschool through Confirmation; Chanukah Party
Nov 20	Board Meeting – 7 PM	Dec 18	Board Meeting – 7 PM
Nov 21	Shabbat Services – 8 PM Led by Suzy Stone	Dec 21	No School
Nov 22	Spencer Blum Bar Mitzvah – 10 AM	Dec 27	Sisterhood Sponsored Community Chanukah Party – 7 PM
Nov 23	School – Preschool through Confirmation	Dec 28	No School
Nov 30	No School		

President's Message

Ruth Hartman

Dear Shir Ami members and friends,

For those of you who were not able to be with us at Kol Nidre services on October 8, here is the talk that I gave from the bimah that evening. Many of us have been severely affected by the current financial crisis, and we don't yet know what the full impact will be. But the issues discussed here are still important for all of us to be thinking about as stewards of our local Jewish community. Please be in touch with me if you have thoughts about how best to address the challenges we face in these times.

Ruth

It is my honor and privilege to be serving in my third term as your President. Gary and I have been proud members of Congregation Shir Ami for more than 14 years. I devote a lot of time and energy to this community, and there is no question in my mind that every hour I give comes back to me many times over in the richness and depth of my life as a Jewish woman, a parent, a friend, and a community member and leader.

On this holiest of days in the Jewish calendar, synagogue presidents all over the world stand before their congregations and speak about the financial condition of the congregation and ask, as persuasively as they can, for financial support from the assembled members. Some of you have belonged to other congregations in the past, and you have no doubt heard many variations on the president's "High Holyday Appeal."

At Shir Ami, the appeal is not part of our High Holyday minhag, our practice. In fact, we don't have much of a culture of fundraising at all. Perhaps this is one of the things you really appreciate about our congregation. And I'm with you on that point. So I'm not going to ask you for money tonight. But I am going to ask you to think about the future wellbeing of our congregation and, in particular, its physical home.

In Parashat Terumah, which we have studied at least twice at our women's retreat, there's a passage in which Adonai says, "And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." Adonai instructs Moses to "Tell the Israelite people to bring Me gifts; you shall accept gifts for Me from every person whose heart so moves him." The gifts that are enumerated in Exodus 25 range from gold and silver currency to more unique contributions such as crimson yarns, dolphin skins, and aromatic oils.

The founders of Shir Ami established a wonderful home in which the Jews of the greater Castro Valley area have been able to create space for God to dwell among us for the past 40 years. They purchased and converted this building. They also

established bylaws and a congregational culture that embody equality, openness, and a participatory spirit.

As your elected lay leadership, the Board and I are responsible for the health of this community, for sustaining the legacy of our founders and of all the members over the years to whom Shir Ami has meant so much. Even more importantly, it is our task to ensure that Shir Ami can continue to serve as a dwelling place for Jewish prayer, learning, and celebration, and for divine inspiration, for future generations.

I ask you to look around you. Our dwelling place is in need of care and nurturing. Much as we love this old building with all its quirks, I'm sure each one of us can readily name areas in which it needs repair and improvement for safety, security, accessibility, and appeal. But, perhaps in part because we have not had a culture of fundraising, and because we have prioritized keeping annual dues low, we find ourselves today lacking the financial resources to properly maintain our home, to ensure its long-term viability. And this is a situation that we now need to change. So although I do not have pledge cards for you tonight, I do want to open up a conversation that we will need to continue throughout this year of 5769. At some time this year, your Board and I will be asking every member to contribute to a building fund specifically for taking care of our physical home. Just as was described in the provisioning of the Mishkan in Parashat Terumah, where some brought precious metals while others brought colorful yarn and animal skins, we will ask you to give in accordance with your ability. We hope those who are able will give generously. We will ask those whose means are more limited, or who are still recovering from the current financial crisis, to give what they can. In the spirit of equality and participation at Shir Ami, everyone's contributions will be valued equally, whether large or small. But this is something I believe we do need to take on together, as a community.

The hour is late and I appreciate your attention. In difficult and uncertain times, we come together to worship and connect with each other. We share our precious traditions, our faith, and our commitment as Jews to the bettering of our world, with our friends, our children, and our grandchildren. As we look to the coming year, let us commit ourselves to investing in the sustenance of our spirits, our relationships, and the physical home in which so much is possible when we welcome what is most holy to dwell among us.

G'mar chatimah tovah, may you be inscribed and sealed for a year of blessing.

Rabbis' Corner

Matt Dreffin

Suzy Stone

I'd like to you to take a few moments and ask yourself, "What is the one word that describes me best?" Have you picked one out? I'd wager that you said an attribute or an adjective and did not use *your name*. It's often an overlooked as an option for description. When we think about ourselves we think about our actions, deeds, or emotions, but how often do we look at the most basic representation of ourselves?

What's in a name? We go by many, each with its own associated meanings. We respond to some negatively and others in a very positive way. How these names are chosen happens many different ways. Names can come out of events, such as Randall 'Rocketman' Cunningham (a former football quarterback, who was notoriously fast), some for fun such as "Little John" in Robin Hood, and one way in which we're very familiar, being named after someone close that is deceased.

Throughout our lives these names are not static. Often times we adapt them to the life situation we happen to be in. We use special nicknames for babies and our younger children. Perhaps Mike changes his name to Michael after exiting college and beginning to apply for jobs. Many previous generations changed their names (or had them changed) so that they would sound more "native" and not stick out as immigrants.

I bring all this up because there is one name that is of particular interest of mine. I searched all throughout the TaNaKh and it is only mentioned once. In the first sentence of Jonah it reads: "Now the word of God came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying..." This is all we know about Amittai - he is the father of Jonah. More often than not, the names in the TaNaKh are abundant with meaning. They foreshadow events to come, reflect past occurrences, or have to do with the nature of the person (The Prophet Ezekiel ends in "el," a word for God).

While Amittai only occurs once, and we are left without any background, it too is filled with meaning. The root for Amittai is *aleph, mem, taf*, also know as *emet*... truth. The ending *yod* adds the possessive "my." Amittai is "my truth." Equally, all our names have a great truth in them. All it takes is for us to dig into it a little bit and find out what how we can live up to our namesake.

Shalom Aleichem,

Matt



Nov. 2nd Kindergarten – Confirmation
Nov. 9th No School Shabbaton
Nov. 16th Preschool – Confirmation
Nov. 23rd Preschool – Confirmation
Nov. 30th No School Thanksgiving

At our house this month we are absorbed in preparations for Spencer's Bar Mitzvah.

When our family first started at Shir Ami I wasn't sure where it would take us. As the non-Jewish member of an interfaith family I had no understanding of a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, and Jeff, the Jewish member of the family, had not experienced a Bar Mitzvah of his own. However, as Sophia approached the age of 13 we realized that we were committed to completing a process we had begun somewhat unwittingly. What brought us to understand this is less clear. I came from a religious Christian family, and when my mother asked if my spiritual needs were being met in a synagogue I found myself answering, "why yes, you know they really are". Jeff, coming from a family that never attended a synagogue, nevertheless found a sense of community that was very meaningful, and also I think a piece of his family history that had been previously untapped.

And then there is what I see for our children. Sophia walked away from the bimah after her Bat Mitzvah a couple of inches taller in spirit than when she had approached it that morning. Since that day, she has not lost those two inches. It is an amazing thing for a teen to know they have completed the process a Bar or Bat Mitzvah represents, and when the process comes packaged with a lesson from the Torah, even sweeter.

My goal for our school is to help each child, and each family, develop and deepen this positive community connection and Jewish identity. Starting with our youngest students, we are focused on a fun, supportive, engaging Jewish experience. The Bar/Bat Mitzvah is an important and rewarding milestone in their Jewish journey. Watching this year's Religious School classrooms, I see that our teachers are doing a great job bringing Torah to life for your children.

Thanks, Jodi.

Adult Education

Diana Zankowsky

In November, Congregation Shir Ami will continue to offer several different adult education classes and gatherings.

Come join Rabbinic Intern Matt Dreffin on November 15, for Havdalah and the film "The Syrian Bride." The Bride is from a Druze village in Northern Israel and is engaged to a man in Syria whom she has never met. The film displays the intricacies of the area and the relations between the different races/peoples. It is a comedic drama that promises to illuminate a sliver of the complex nature of conflicting cultures existing in such a small and desirable land. Made in 2004 it has been nominated and won many international awards. Snacks and a group debriefing will follow.

DATE CHANGE!

Our once-monthly book study group will continue our study of Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts, edited by Barry W. Holtz. Last month we looked at the introduction. This month, on November 19th (not the 12th as listed on the synagogue calendar) we will look at the first chapter, The Biblical Narrative, pages 31-81. This text, recommended by the URJ as one of the best books, will help us to learn how to read and study Bible, Midrash, Talmud and other writings. Please email Diana Zankowsky, dzankowsky@aol.com, to learn the location of the class.



Judy Ganz continues to teach the weekly "Learning Hebrew through Prayer" class, for those who already have basic literacy skills. Please contact Judy at jbganz@aol.com if you are interested in joining.

Rabbinic Intern Suzy Stone will not be offering an adult education session on the weekend that she is here because of the Bar Mitzvah of Spencer Blum.

Our on-going monthly class for adults interested in conversion to Judaism will continue to meet on Saturdays. Contact Diana Zankowsky, dzankowsky@aol.com, for more information or if you are interested in joining.

Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh Group

Jan Dombrower



The new month of Cheshvan was brought in with the theme relating to the "bitter" month. Cheshvan is known as the bitter month because it follows the previous month filled with numerous holidays and is absent of any holidays. Sisterhood looked to see if we could turn bitter into sweet. We discussed some of the fore mothers who had turned misfortune into advantage or blessings. We also personally shared how our bitter experiences turned to sweet ones.

We planned the year's calendar and ended with Rosh Chodesh rituals and blessings. For refreshments we enjoyed a bittersweet chocolate fountain.

Sisterhood has decided to give a donation to the Susan G. Komen organization in honor of Marlene Lamnin along with our best wishes to her.

Because Rosh Chodesh, next month, comes during Thanksgiving week, Sisterhood planned to have a field trip in November. Please join us as we go see Fiddler on the Roof, starring Lisa Silver and her girls in the ensemble. We are meeting on Sunday, November 2nd at 2:00 at the Chanticleers Theatre located in Castro Valley. If you haven't reserved a seat yet, please do and join us.

<http://www.chanticleers.org/>

SAVE THESE DATES!!

- Sisterhood sponsored Chanukah party on Saturday, Dec 27th at 7:00 at Shir Ami.
- Annual Women's Retreat in the Redwoods, February 20–22, 2009— watch your email for the flier, coming soon!

The Tzedakah Box
A Social Action Column
Sara Lamnin
Daryl Berman



Giving Thanks and Giving Help

On any given night, there are 750,000 people on the streets, with somewhere between 1.3 and 2 million people experiencing homelessness over the course of a year. Families make up about 36 percent of the people who become homeless. (Religious Action Center, 2008)

In the Hayward/Castro Valley area, an interfaith group of faith community members, people living on the street, and concerned residents have come together to coordinate feeding programs, social services, and safe spaces for those trying to move towards a stable future. This “Hayward Community Action Network” is collecting good condition Socks, Blankets, Coats, Tents, and Sleeping Bags to help protect community members this winter. All sizes are helpful. Donations can be brought to Shir Ami, or contact Sara Lamnin (510) 733-5114 or ledorvdor@yahoo.com.

Want more information about the national issues? For a more detailed list of pending housing and community development legislation, go to www.nlihc.org/news/legupdate.htm on the National Low Income Housing Coalition's website. The Reform Movement has been calling for increased housing resources for the past fifty years. For more information on the reform movements programs and actions, visit www.rac.org

Giving Understanding, Gaining Insight

Rev. Katie Kandarian of Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church has formed a group called “Conversations on Racism.” The purpose of the group is for people of various faiths to better understand how racism affects all of us and to create an environment where we can build relationships with people from a diversity of backgrounds. The conversation is open to members all South Hayward Parish congregations. Shir Ami is a member congregation. The meeting is either the fourth or the last Wed. of the month. Contact Daryl Berman for further information 510 538-6022.

SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



COMMUNITY SHABBAT WEEKEND

SAVE THE DATE! JOIN YOUR COMMUNITY TO LEARN TOGETHER, PLAY TOGETHER AND EXPAND THE WAYS YOU LIVE JEWISHLY...

Mark your calendars from **Friday, Nov. 7 - Sunday, Nov. 9** and join our multi-congregational, multi-generational and multi-faceted Shabbat weekend at URJ Camp Newman in Santa Rosa. All ages warmly welcomed; engaging educational, cultural and social programs guaranteed.

We are very excited to announce that Cantor Ellen Dreskin will be our Guest Artist/Scholar-in-Residence for the weekend. Ellen Dreskin is a teacher of liturgy, synagogue transformation and mysticism, who has served for many years on the faculty of URJ Summer Kallot, Hava Nashira and the URJ Kutz Camp Leadership Academy. Ellen has worked with Jews of all denominations from Houston to Chicago and Los Angeles to Boston, both as a scholar in residence and in her capacity as Director of Programs for Synagogue 2000, a national, not-for-profit institute dedicated to revitalizing and re-energizing synagogue life in North America. She has served as both Cantor and Educator at Woodlands Community Temple in White Plains, New York and at Anshe Chesed-Fairmount Temple in Cleveland, Ohio, and as the spiritual leader of Chavurat Tikvah in Westchester County, New York. Ellen has also served as Associate Dean of HUC-JIR in New York, and sings with Begeg Kefet, a musical tzedakah collective. Ellen is a native Texan, a 1986 graduate of HUC-JIR School of Sacred Music and has a Master's Degree in Jewish Communal Service from Brandeis University. Check out www.dreskin.us to learn more about this amazing Jewish educator, performer and scholar.

This Community-wide Shabbaton is jointly presented by Congregation Shir Ami, Temple Beth Torah, Temple Beth Sholom and Congregation Beth Emek. We are equally excited to let you know that Rabbis Avi Schulman, Harry Manhoff, and Richard Winer and Student Rabbi Rebekah Stern will be leading services and many of our other activities as will several other clergy and lay leaders, enabling us to offer inspiring and diverse programs for all ages and all interests.

Program details and registration flier are available at Shir Ami, or contact Barb Haber, bjhaber@sbcglobal.net for more information. Registration deadline has passed, but contact cbecordinator@bethemek.org if you'd like to attend.

SHIR AMI BULLETIN BOARD



Jewish Community Center of San Francisco Bookfest – Sunday, Nov. 2

Celebrate the best of today's Jewish literary landscape at this popular annual event. Discover the hottest new Jewish authors and get lost in an entire day of books! This year's extravaganza includes David Grossman (keynote), Amy Bloom, Anne Roiphe, Etgar Keret, Lore Segal, Ilan Stavans, Rabbi David Wolpe, and many more!

Sunday, November 2, 2008

Author events: 11:00am - 6:30pm

Drop-in childcare available: 10:00am - 6:30pm

Onsite bookstore courtesy of The Booksmith: 10:30am - 7:00pm

Free of charge; No reservations required.

Tickets required for keynote.

For a complete schedule of authors and events, visit <http://www.jccsf.org/bookfest>

Shir Ami's Senses Shabbat – November 14th

November 14th we invite you to come experience Shir Ami's Senses Shabbat! Promising to be engaging, unique, and fun, kids of all ages and their families are more than welcome to experience Shabbat using at least five of our senses, yes, that means, GASP!, even tasting during services. It will be a wonderful community experience.

Please let Matt know if you will be coming, at <mailto:Rabbi.Matt@congshirami.org>, so that the proper amount of supplies can be acquired. See you there!

URJ Special Program -- Hope and Healing

Please join us on Sunday, November 16th, 2008 at Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills for a day of support and healing. Learn from a distinguished panel as they share their personal and professional experiences helping cancer patients and their loved ones cope with illness, avoid feelings of isolation, and find spiritual healing. All clergy, lay leaders, educators, cancer survivors, family members and congregants wishing to learn more about hope and healing are encouraged to participate. Additional information is provided in the attached flier. For questions, please contact Rebecca Schwartz at the URJ Department of Jewish Family Concerns, <mailto:RSchwartz@urj.org> or toll free at (888) 756-8242 ext 29.

The Community Page November, 2008

Yahrzheits:

November 14, 2008

Gustav Kurz, father of Fran Johnson

Freda Hansen, aunt of Toni Schulberg and Sidney Simpson

November 21, 2008

Fanny Hirsh Engelman, grandmother of Barbara Nemoyten and an early Shir Ami member

Sidney J. Leshin, father of Maryann Leshin

Martin Michelson, brother-in-law of David Schulberg Ada & Jack Rubinstein, mother and father of Ron Rubenstein

Kaddish List: (to be read at all services in November)

Betya Druker, mother of Alex Druker

Sy Moubert, long-time former member of Shir Ami

Chris Partridge, son of Ricki Baird, previous members of Shir Ami

May their memory be a blessing...

Ever wonder how the names read out loud for yartzheit and kaddish at Friday night services get on that list? If you are a member of Shir Ami, and want a personal reminder for the yartzheit of a loved one, just send Toni Schulberg the following information: the name of the deceased; the relationship of that person to the member of Shir Ami; the full date (month, day, year) that person died; and whether you want to use the Hebrew or English calendar for their yartzheit (Toni will look up the Hebrew date for you).

Questions? Call Toni at 278-1695 or e-mail her at toniaps@comcast.net

TODAH RABAH FOR THIS GENEROUS DONATION:

From Bruce & Susan Carter: for the Yahrzheits of Maury Finkle & Milton Ward.

A contribution to Shir Ami is a great way to honor, remember, or show appreciation for someone special. It's easy, send a check and note to: Florrie Finkle

18730 West Cavendish
Castro Valley, CA 94552

Florrie will send a card to the person you are honoring and your dedication will appear on this page.



TODAH RABAH TO OUR ONEG HOSTS

- ❖ For October 17th: Sharon Golembo with cleanup help from the Shir Ami community
- ❖ For October 24th: Diana Zankowsky & Ruth Hartman

What's Nu?

Two new families have joined Shir Ami:

Joan Hirshberg
23039 Canyon Terrace Dr.
Castro Valley 94552
Email: fredjonie@aol.com
Phone: 510-583-9476

Peter & Lorraine Lewis
& son Gabby, age 4
1735 Germaine Ct.
Hayward 94541
E-mail: PL1155@comcast.net
Phone: 510-889-9858

Shir Ami member Cary Nasatir and his youth Klezmer band were featured in a recent article in the J. Weekly entitled, "Get this party started: Mighty KlezTones aren't kidding around when it comes to playing music." To find the story, go to www.jewishsf.com and search on "Nasatir."

Attention Parents & Teens: Information (lots of it!) & registration for NFTY Convention is now available online at www.nfty.org/nc09/parents. NFTY Convention happens every second year over President's Day weekend -- this year it will be February 13-17 in Washington D.C. It is really an amazing event, and a group from our EDJY youth group will be attending together. If you have questions, please contact Ruth Hartman (president@congshirami.org) .

Remember that fantastic Noodle Kugel that Marci Loss made and brought to the Break the Fast? Well Marci has shared the recipe!

Upside Down Kugel

by Shellie Cohen

(Serves 12)

Ingredients:

1 lb medium or wide noodles
1 cup sour cream
1 cup creamed cottage cheese, small curd
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 pinches salt
1 tsp. vanilla
cinnamon to taste
4 eggs beaten
1/2 cup golden raisins

Glaze for bottom of pan:

1/2 cup butter or margarine melted
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar

Cooking Instructions:

Cook noodles and rinse well with cold water, drain
Add all other ingredients and mix well
Melt butter in 13 x 9 x 2 pan
Sprinkle brown sugar evenly over the pan
Bake 350 degree for 1 hour
Cool in pan 10 minutes
Separate from edge with knife
Invert pan onto plate (turn upside down)

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Wall Plaques
Florrie Finkle
<mailto:donations@congshirami.org>

Paresha Vaera (Appeared)

The Lord Appeared

***"I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians
and I will deliver you from their bondage..."***



Kids' Shabbat 6:00 PM and Pot Luck 6:45PM
Friday, November 14, 2008

Please participate in Shir Ami's rotating food assignment

A to O

Main dish

P to Z

Salad or side dish

Services at 8:00 PM will be led by
Matt Dreffin



Temple Beth Shalom's Sisterhood

Annual Chanukah Bazaar



Sunday, November 16, 2008

10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Temple Beth Shalom's Zucker Hall

642 Dolores Avenue, San Leandro (510.357.8505)

We'll have lots of vendors, delicious food,
and our cookbook:

Recipes Through Time, 120 Years of Cooking Experience

Shop early, Shop often, Shop here.

Paresha Sarah

The burial of Sarah

in a cave, purchased by Abraham 3700 years ago

The Cave of Machpelah Tomb of the Patriarchs



*Burial place of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah
Hebron, West Bank*

**Services on Friday, November 21 at 8:00 PM
will be led by**

Suzy Stone