

DECEMBER 2014 BULLETIN ~Kislev/Tevet 5775



CONGREGATION SHIR AMI

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Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley is an intimate, intergenerational Reform Jewish Community that welcomes interfaith families.

Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism

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Thanks to Holiday Fair Volunteers

Thank you to Valerie Goldman, Sam Krantz, Mickey Lange, Sara Lamnin, and Jon Zimmerman for their hard work in decorating our synagogue for Chanukah and the Holiday Fair & Boutique.

Thanks to everyone who helped out at this year's Holiday Fair & Boutique, including Barbara Heimowitz, Harriet Skelly, Valerie Goldman, Vicky Sapper, Debbie Schriber, Lilly Erickson, Jan Dombrower, Marlene Lamnin, Pat Palmer, Bonnie Frey, Sara Lamnin, Sharalyn Stebbin, Jane Steele, Judy Brackin, Ruth Hartman, Rita Weikal, Barbar-Ann Lewis, Diana Zankowsky, and Jon Zimmerman.

Trash Talk

Straight talk from the editor.

It may seem unusual to be talking trash in the Bulletin, especially on the first page, but I feel it needs to be done. Using this space to talk about Shir Ami's garbage and recycling program helps to emphasize the importance of this topic.

Shir Ami has done a great deal to reduce our waste. We have replaced disposable plates and utensils with dishwasher-safe items. The small "plastic" cups we use for juice and wine blessing are actually *compostable*. We have recycling containers throughout the building.



But what goes where? Is it green waste? Blue waste? Just-plain-old-trash waste? How do we know where the trash goes? Here's a quick primer:

- **GREEN goes in the GROUND (as compost):** **All food waste, any paper products that have been in contact with food** (pizza boxes, napkins, etc.), and **yard waste** go in GREEN. This also includes our little cups for kiddish and paper towels from the bathrooms.
- **BLUE comes BACK TO YOU:** Can it be recycled? **Glass, plastic, paper, metal cans, cardboard.**
- GARBAGE is what is left over. Let's minimize this waste!

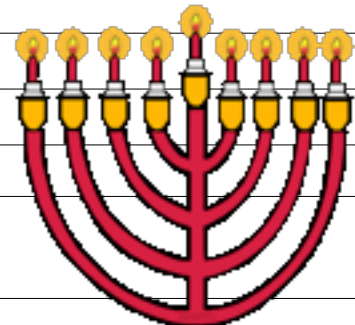


Event Calendar

You can always find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, www.congshirami.org !

Thu.	Dec.	4	7:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami, all are welcome
Fri.	Dec.	5	7:30 pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Julie, Human Rights Shabbat
Sat.	Dec.	6	4:00 pm	Continued discussion of Human Rights and Shabbat , adult learning with Rabbi Julie
Sat.	Dec.	6	5:00 pm	Torah Trope and Havdallah, adult learning with Rabbi Julie
Sun.	Dec.	7	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Wed.	Dec.	10	7:30 pm	Jewish Meditation Group , contact Julie Greenfield, meditation@CongShirAmi.org
Sat.	Dec.	13	9:00 am	Introduction to Judaism , ongoing class, all are welcome, with Diana Zankowsky
Sun.	Dec.	14	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30
Sun.	Dec.	14	11:30 am	Tot Talk , a free program for families with children under 5 years old. 11:30-12:30
Wed.	Dec.	17	7:00 pm	Sisterhood/ Rosh Chodesh Chanukah Party at Bettina Skehan's home. Details to follow.
Fri.	Dec.	19	6:30 pm	Chanukah Potluck, Menorah Lighting and Chanukah Party led by Rabbi Julie-- bring a dish to share, your menorah & candles
Sat.	Dec.	20	3:00 pm	Who were the Maccabees, Anyway? adult learning with Rabbi Julie
Sat.	Dec.	20	4:30 pm	Wine, Cheese & Chocolate: Infusing Ethics in Your Food Practice , with Rabbi Julie
Sun.	Dec.	21	9/10:30 am	Sunday School: Hebrew, 9-10:30; Religious, 10:30-12:30

Fri.-Sun., Feb. 20-22, Shir Ami's Women's Retreat, *Reflect and Connect*.
 At San Dimiano Retreat Center; cost \$240; contact Ruth Hartman with
 questions, 510-582-3379 or events@congshirami.org



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President's Message

Dear Shir Ami Community,

Last month we welcomed 7 new member households into our community. This month please join me in welcoming two more new families:

- Julia and Clinton Blackburn, their sons Rowan and Emrys and daughter Breena
- JT and Juliette Goldstone and their sons Rex and Finn

Lets show all of our new members Shir Ami's "audacious hospitality". I love this phrase which Rabbi Rick Jacobs, President of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) uses to convey welcoming behavior:

*[Audacious hospitality](#) isn't just a temporary act of kindness so that people don't feel left out; it's an ongoing invitation to be part of a community where we can become all that God wants us to be - and a way to transform ourselves in the process. **Audacious hospitality is a two-way street, where synagogue and stranger need each other.** Hospitality is not just our chance to teach newcomers but, just as important, an opportunity for them to teach us.*

A way we can show our audacious hospitality is for all members, current and new, to wear name tags at services and other Shir Ami events. This will help us get to know our new members and for them to get to know us. Toni Schulberg set up a system on a wall in the small classroom for us to easily pick up our name tags. We'll have a Shir Ami member available to help you get your name tag when you arrive and to collect the tags before you leave. We will also have blank name tags ready for your guests. Please feel free to give me your constructive feedback after we have tried this system a time or two!

I am looking forward to sharing this year's Chanukah menorah lighting and potluck dinner on December 19th with our ever-growing community! I wish you all a happy and safe new year as well.

Harriet



Harriet Skelly
president@congshirami.org

Editor's note: Below is a request for an item that we could use at Shir Ami. From time-to-time we will list wanted items in the Bulletin.

Wanted!

Currently on the Shir Ami wish list is a weatherproof wooden picnic table in good condition for our back yard under the pepper tree.

If you or any of your friends would like to donate this item to our Synagogue, please contact Milton Palmer or Harriet Skelly.

We will arrange for a pickup, if necessary!



Rabbinic Interns' Page

Turn the Season of Receiving into the Season of Giving

It starts earlier and earlier each year. The days get shorter, the music changes, the stores re-decorate their windows, the lights go up and we encounter bells dinging each time we walk into the grocery store. While I know I certainly appreciate the radio stations going back to regular music on December 26th, there is even something enjoyable about hearing the optimistic and upbeat festive music on the radio (even if it should wait a little longer to begin in my opinion!).



As the year races toward its end, many of us find ourselves in a festive mood as we make preparations for the holidays that end our secular year. However your family celebrates, the month of December is one full of holidays, family time, traditions, gift-receiving and gift-giving. When we were young, this season was all about what we received. I remember pouring over toy catalogues, bending down the corners of those items I wanted and hoping that the number of times I mentioned how much I really would enjoy that new American Girl doll book would ensure that it was one of my Hanukkah presents. I also have a December birthday, so this month had an even more festive and receiving nature to it when I was young.

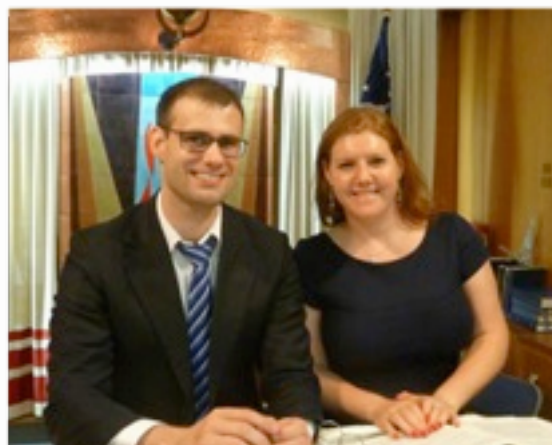
However, when I was around eight years old, my parents decided to expand and adapt the meaning of our Hanukkah celebrations. One night of Hanukkah became charity night. As a family, we decided on a charity to support and our family made a donation to that organization. My parents would provide some ideas and the four of us would decide our favorite for that year. We also participated in *Christmas For Everyone* each December 24th, a completely volunteer-based project that provides clothes, food and gifts to families in need in Contra Costa County during

the holiday season. I feel very lucky that I was taught from a young age to both realize that I had received many blessings in my life and to have learned the value of giving back and supporting my local community.

Our sages teach us that we are obligated to first take care of those close to us, only then does our obligation extend to those further away. While national and international causes are very important and often receive a lot of media attention, there is a great value in staying local and working to support our local communities. Over twenty Shir Ami members spent several hours last month working at the Alameda County Community Food Bank where we learned that the need is greater in this community than it has ever been. So during this season, I encourage you to live the phrase "think globally, act locally" and find a cause close to home that inspires you and your family to act. Whether it involves monetary donations or support through volunteer hours or advocacy, I encourage you to find something you care about and make it a part of your life this holiday season and this upcoming secular year. It is a great way to enhance our holiday season and these organizations need our support year round.

I wish you and your family a season of health, happiness, laughter and fun and may we enter 2015 inspired, relaxed and excited to take on whatever the year has to offer us!

Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler



Rabbinic Interns, 2014-2015

Benj Fried rabbi.benj@congshirami.org
Julie Bressler rabbi.julie@congshirami.org

Adult Ed/Lifelong Learning

Adult Learning w the Rabbi

December 5-7, with Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler

Friday, 12/5, 7:30 pm: Human Rights Shabbat
Rabbinic Intern Julie will be speaking about T'ruah, the Rabbinic Call for Human Rights and the intersection of Jewish values and universal human rights.

Saturday, 12/6, 4 pm: Shabbat and Human Rights
We will continue to explore some of the underlying themes of Shabbat and compare them to our understanding of human rights. What is Jewish about human rights? Is Shabbat more like a right, a reward or a responsibility?

Saturday, 12/6, 5:30 pm: Torah Trope Get a head start on your New Year's Resolution to learn Torah trope (it is one of your resolutions right?!). Whether you have learned before or are totally new, there will be something for everyone in this class and you will all leave humming new trope phrases. We will end the class with Havdallah.

Dec. 19-21, with Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler

Friday, 12/19, 6:30 pm- Chanukkah at Shir Ami!
Potluck/Menorah Candlelighting/Chanukah Party

Saturday, 12/20, 3:00 pm - Who were the Maccabees anyway? We know the story of the Hanukkah miracle, but how did the Maccabees behave afterwards? Learn about the complicated and complex history of these supposed heroes and discuss the different versions of this story that exist in Jewish culture and history.

Saturday, 12/20, 4:30 pm- (Fair Trade) Wine, Cheese & Chocolate- infusing ethics into your food practice. While enjoying these yummy snacks, we will discuss the Jewish imperative for food justice and how we can incorporate some of these practices into our lives. We will also celebrate Havdallah together.

January 9-11, with Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried
January 23-25, with Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried

During his January visits, Benj will be holding "office hours" to meet with congregants one-on-one by appointment. Email Benj to schedule a time.
rabbi.benj@congshirami.org

Introduction to Judaism

The Introduction to Judaism class met in early November. We continued our discussion and study of lifecycle events by looking at marriage and mikvah.

Our next meeting will be on December 13. We will be meeting at Congregation Shir Ami. We will take a break from Jewish lifecycle events and instead we will be studying Chanukah.

Throughout the school year, we will be meeting only once per month, intentionally on a Saturday when the rabbinic interns are not in town. The schedule follows:

January 17
February 14

March 28
April 11

Dates may have to change; check the congregational calendar at www.congshirami.org for the latest information.

There is no cost for the class except for the purchase of the required text: "Every Person's Guide to Judaism" by Stephen J. Einstein and Lydia Kukoff. If you haven't yet attended but want to join, please email Diana (religion@congshirami.org) with any questions and to confirm your attendance.

Community Information

Jewish Meditation Group

Next group: Wednesday, December 10, 7:30 pm.

A group for practice of Jewish meditation and spirituality. Held at Congregation Shir Ami the second Wednesdays each month on a drop-in basis. Exact format to be decided by group; probably to include guided meditations, silent meditation, chanting, movement, and drash (a talk). No meditation or Jewish religious experience necessary. Free to members; by donation from non-members. For more info, contact Julie Greenfield;
Meditation@CongShirAmi.org

Camp Tawonga

Camp Tawonga is a Jewish, residential summer camp. Camp Tawonga is American Camp Association accredited, and has a staff/camper ratio of 1/1.5. Tawonga's 2015 program dates are available on our website and registration opens in December! Tawonga's beautiful 160 acre property is located right outside Yosemite National Park in Stanislaus National Forest. Tawonga offers camp sessions as well as teen leadership, a teen Israel trip, and adventure travel programs for 2nd through 12th graders. Tawonga also offers weekend family camps.

Join us for a Camp Tawonga information session in your neighborhood. Meet Camp Tawonga Directors to learn about our great programs, and get all your questions answered. Snacks and activities for kids provided! Tell a friend! Bring a friend! [More information and RSVP here.](#)

[415-543-2267](tel:415-543-2267), www.tawonga.org,
or info@tawonga.org

Yahrzeits

December 5, 2014

Dora Alperovich,
Larry Dean,
Lazarus Lewis,

aunt of Irina Druker
father of Tyler Dean
father of Peter Lewis

December 19, 2014

Frederick Apple,
Sheila Arthur,
John Blum,
Ann and Michael Bruser,
Joseph and Meshka Druker,
Inez Gautreaux, (pronounced GO-TRO)
Frieda Greenbaum,
Tom Manley,
Jan (pronounced YAHN) Okoniewski,
Isaac Rosenberg,
Max Schulberg,

father of Angie Ross
long time former member of Shir Ami
father of Jeff Blum
active early members of Shir Ami
grandparents of Alex Druker
aunt of Toni Schulberg
grandmother of Diana Zankowsky
former member of Shir Ami
husband of Marion Kramer
grandfather of Alex Druker
father of David Schulberg

Kaddish List (those who have died during the past 11 months) [please read at both services]

Lorraine Golembo,
Harry Yoseph Mitchell,
Bobbie Clark,
Earl T. Stebben,

step-mother of Sharon Golembo
brother of Helen Markus
sister of Marci Loss
husband of Sharalyn Stebben

School Notes

On Saturday November 1st, all the older Hebrew learners went to Beth Emek to see a bar mitzvah. The purpose was for the students to see what they are working towards. Afterwards they went out for pizza to discuss the similarities and differences they noticed between Beth Emek and Shir Ami services.

On November 16th students ten and older went with the many members of Shir Ami to the food bank to help sort food. The younger students stayed at Shir Ami. The topic for the 16th was Jewish weddings. They made chupas, stomped on a glass and acted out a wedding with puppets and bears dressed in wedding clothes. Jan is making a life cycle book with the first graders. They have pages about birth, bar/bat mitzvah, weddings and next week will be about funerals.



Community Service

A spirited group of twenty-two Shir Ami youth and adults sorted and packed food at the Alameda County Community Food Bank on Sunday November 16. Most of the religious school students worked with Bonnie, Diana and Fred on breaking down bins of produce – oranges, pears, and carrots – into packages that could be delivered to people in need. Many of the adults worked on the package goods side, sorting canned, boxed and bagged goods and packing them into boxes that the food bank will distribute.

On the one hand it was discouraging to learn that one in five Alameda County families need food support now, up from one in six when we started working at the food bank about three years ago. On the other hand we were happy to be able to work with three other community groups to pack enough food for ten thousand meals, which I figured out should be enough to feed ten people for a year!

After the work, Rabbi Julie led a discussion on the importance of participating in both local efforts to ameliorate the effects of food insecurity on local families, as well as policy initiatives aimed at turning around the trend towards increasing need.

Diana pointed out that one thing we should consider is donating to ACCFB between now and the end of the year because there is a donor offering matching funds. Though our congregation is small we can and do make large contributions to the well-being of the community at large, and we will continue to do so. coordinated and smoothly

Tom Spitzer

Shir Ami volunteers at the Food Bank, 11/16/2014



Chanukah Pot Luck, Dec. 19

Chanukah Pot Luck and Menorah Lighting Party



*Friday, December 19th at 6:30 pm
led by Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler*

Everyone is Welcome!

*Please bring a main dish, side dish,
dessert or beverage, along with your
own menorah and 5 candles to light!*

Women's Retreat, Feb. 20-22

Join us for our 19th Annual

**Shir Ami Women's
Retreat:
Reflect and
Connect!**

Friday, February 20 – Sunday, February 22, 2015

At the beautiful San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville

Connect with your Jewish sisters and yourself! Join us for a weekend of women's friendship, worship, creativity, music, and play. Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler joins us to share her spiritual leadership. As always, newcomers are *very* welcome.

The cost for the weekend is \$240.

Please register online at <http://tinyurl.com/o9sctyj>, and mail your check, payable to Ruth Hartman, the same day. (Mailing address is at the online registration site.)

*Register ASAP, no later than **February 1.***

Questions?

Contact Ruth Hartman: 510-582-3379 or events@congshirami.org

Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh

UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH- Chanukah Party

Our Chanukah Party will be on Wednesday, Dec 17, at 7:00 at the home of Bettina Skehan. We will have dinner, Menorah lighting, and a gift exchange.

Please bring

- Latkas, salad, or dessert.
- Bring your Menorah and 3 candles for the second night.
- Bring a nice gift with a \$20.00 maximum for our gift stealing exchange.

Look to your email for more information as we near the party.



ROSH CHODESH RECAP

On October 22 the Sisterhood celebrated Cheshvan. Fifteen women attended the event hosted by Sharon and Rose at Sharon's house.

Each attendee was asked to bring a chopped vegetable or favorite ingredient to help make a hearty soup, a nod to the agricultural aspect of our theme.

The theme this year was "A Shemittah Year" (or Shmita) 5775. Shemittah is a Sabbath year which occurs as the seventh year of a seven-year agricultural cycle mandated by the Torah for the Land of Israel, and also observed in contemporary Judaism.

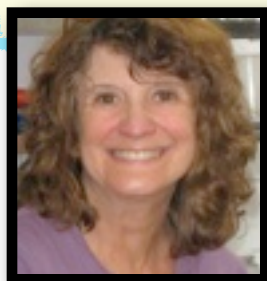
This particular evening, we discussed how 5775 can be a year of release.

We had lively conversation about the forgiveness of debt. We also discussed economic and consumer trends, like buying local goods and services.

We chatted about releasing debt, which was not limited to money but also relationship debt and emotional debt. We then wrote on paper specific situations that were on our mind and then enjoyed releasing them into the fire as a symbol of liberation.

We also celebrated The birthdays of Rose Firestone and Toni Schulberg with a delicious cake!.

[Recap for the November 23 Thanksgiving feast will be in next month's Bulletin]



For more information on Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh, contact Jan Dombrower Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org