

# May 2015 BULLETIN Iyar/Sivan 5775



CONGREGATION  
**SHIR AMI**

4529 Malabar Ave.  
Castro Valley, CA 94546  
Email: [Info@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Info@CongShirAmi.org)  
Web: [www.CongShirAmi.org](http://www.CongShirAmi.org)

Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley is an intimate, intergenerational Reform Jewish Community that welcomes interfaith families.  
Affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism

*Event Calendar* Find up-to-the-minute event details at Shir Ami's website, [www.congshirami.org](http://www.congshirami.org)

Fri.	May	1	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Benj Fried
Sat.	May	2			"Office hours" with Rabbi Benj Fried: email Benj at <a href="mailto:Rabbi.benj@congshirami.org">Rabbi.benj@congshirami.org</a>
Sat.	May	2	4:30	pm	Choices in Modern Jewish Theology, "The God Concept" with Rabbi Benj Fried Havdallah follows discussion
Sat.	May	2	6:30	pm	Potluck Dinner at Shir Ami, celebrate Rabbi Benj Fried's birthday and last weekend with us!
Sun.	May	3	9/10:30	am	Sunday School: Hebrew School, 9-10:30; Religious School, 10:30-12:30
Tue.	May	*5	5:00	pm	T'ai Chi Chih/Qi Gong with David Schulberg (*meets weekly for 12 weeks, 5-6:30 pm)
Tue.	May	5	7:00	pm	Shir Ami's 50ish Anniversary Celebration Planning Meeting, 7:00-9:00 pm
Wed.	May	6	3:00	pm	Continuing session of 6-week study of <a href="#">Pirkei Avot</a> (see page 4), held weekly at Bodi's Java
Thu.	May	7	7:00	pm	Board of Directors Meeting at Shir Ami, all are welcome
Fri.	May	8	7:30	pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Julie Bressler
Sat.	May	9	10:00	am	Leah Brackin Bat Mitzvah at Temple Beth Sholom, San Leandro
Sun.	May	10			Hebrew and Religious School: NO SCHOOL
Wed.	May	13	3:00	pm	Continuing session of 6-week study of <a href="#">Pirkei Avot</a> (see page 4), held weekly at Bodi's Java
Sat.	May	16	7:00	pm	Shir Ami's Saturday Night at the Movies, check weekly email reminder for event details
Sun.	May	17	9/10:30	am	Sunday School, Last Day: Hebrew School, 9-10:30; Religious School, 10:30-12:30
Sun.	May	17	11:30	am	Tot Talk, Last Day of our free monthly program for families with children under age 5
Tue.	May	19	7:00	pm	<a href="#">From Sibling Rivalry to Sibling Revelry</a> parenting workshop led by Rachel Sklar at Shir Ami
Wed.	May	20	3:00	pm	Continuing session of 6-week study of <a href="#">Pirkei Avot</a> (see page 4), held weekly at Bodi's Java
Wed.	May	20	7:30	pm	Rosh Chodesh/Sisterhood Game Night, hosted by Marlene and Sara Lamnin. Look for details in your email update.
Sat.	May	23	8:00	pm	Shavuot Tikkun Leyl, Havdallah, dessert and study led by Barbara-Ann Lewis and Diana Zankowsky
Wed.	May	27	7:30	pm	Jewish Meditation Group, contact Julie Greenfield at <a href="mailto:meditation@congshirami.org">meditation@congshirami.org</a> for details
Fri.	May	29	7:30	pm	Shavuot, Shabbat, Confirmation & Graduate Recognition Service with Diana Zankowsky
Sun.	May	31	12:00	pm	Shir Ami's Potluck Lunch and Annual Membership Meeting
Sun.	June	14	10:00	am	Family-friendly Interfaith Service at Eden United Church of Christ, Hayward, CA

The weekend of May 1-3 is Benj's last weekend with us after 2 years. We will miss him. Julie will be back next year.

# President's Message

Dear Shir Ami Community,

Wow has this year flown by! There are two important dates I'd like you to save on your calendar – Sunday, May 31 and Sunday, June 14.

On Sunday, May 31 at noon Shir Ami will have its annual end-of-year potluck lunch and Annual Members Meeting. The Annual Meeting is called for in the Shir Ami bylaws and is an important part of being a Shir Ami member. Take this opportunity to celebrate the end of the year, learn more about our finances and meet and elect next year's Board of Directors. We will also be honoring our wonderful volunteers.

Shir Ami has been invited by Eden United Church of Christ (Eden UCC) to participate in a joint family friendly service on Sunday, June 14th at 10:00 am. Our communities have been partners in several endeavors (Comida, school supply drive, book drive and Internet Café to mention a few) to provide resources for our neighbors in the Cherryland community. Our partnership with Eden UCC

demonstrates how Shir Ami lives out a core value of Reform Judaism

“..... We will be engaged on issues of local, national and global concern; we will participate in interfaith coalitions and activities; we will speak out on behalf of the vulnerable; and we will seek justice for all. This is who we are.” (<http://urj.org/socialaction/judaism/advocacy/>, Why Advocacy is Central to Reform Judaism, Rabbi Maria Feldman)

The June 14 service will be a chance for us to learn more about the worship practices of our friends at Eden UCC. It's the result of months of shared planning between members of Eden and Shir Ami, and will feature lay leadership from both congregations. A children's program will also be offered so young people from both communities can play together.

I am looking forward to seeing you at both of these events in addition to our regularly scheduled activities.

As a footnote I would like to thank Ruth Hartman for her monthly editing and contributions to my column each month.

Harriet Skelly

## Shir Ami's Summer Services

May 29 Shavuot Service	Diana Zankowsky	July 24	Anastasia Zankowsky & Irene Gilchriese
June 12	Shira Batalion	August 14	Harriet Skelly & Jan Dombrower
June 26	Barbara-Ann Lewis	August 28	Diana Zankowsky
July 10	Saul Kaye		

## Pirkei Avot, Ethics of the Fathers

**Wednesday, 3:00-4:00 pm at Bodi's Java, 6-week class continues May 6, 13, 20**

*Pirkei Avot*, translated as Sayings/Chapters/Ethics of the Fathers, is a slender six-chapter book, traditionally studied as a chapter per week during the weeks between Passover and Shavuot. It contains many famous sayings, such as: “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

We will continue a 6-week class studying *Pirkei Avot*. This will be a 1-hour class that will meet at Bodi's Java on E. Castro Valley Blvd. at 3 pm on Wednesdays. **Meeting days in May are May 6, May 13 and May 20.** Copies of the text can be found in our previous prayer book, Gates of Prayer, or may be purchased online or at any Judaica shop. If you purchase a book, please try to get a contemporary translation.

If you have any questions, either about the text or about the class, please contact Diana Zankowsky at [religion@congshirami.org](mailto:religion@congshirami.org).

# Rabbinic Interns' Page

Rabbinic Intern Bulletin Column

## Reflecting on Our Time

"To everything there is a season and an appointed time for everything under the sun. A time to be born and a time to die... a time to laugh and a time to weep" (Ecclesiastes 3). Of course many of you have heard these immortal words of our Biblical philosopher Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes is the famous pessimist in the Bible who says that there is nothing new under the sun, that all is vanity. His list of the times in our lives: the time to live and time to die, time to plant and time to uproot, always cause us to reflect on life and loss and the meaning we find in it all. It also causes me to reflect on the time that we've shared together.

I feel so incredibly grateful for the past two years. Through my work with Shir Ami, I have grown and matured in ways that I could never have anticipated in September of 2013. Because you all accepted me into your community with such warm embraces and loving kindness, I always dedicated myself to serving you as best as I could. I never could have imagined that I would have loved leading adult education as much as I have with you all. By being patient with me and being there with me as I tried new things and experimented, I feel more confident in myself as a rabbinical presence, ready and eager to serve other communities, and knowing just a little more about how to do so. I leave Shir Ami with friends I will treasure and memories I will cherish. Please know that your small but loving community will always have a special place in my heart.

Ecclesiastes tells us that there is nothing new under the sun—that everything that can and will happen in

the future has already happened. There is some wisdom to this belief. But I think that instead of getting caught up in the monotony of the universe by saying that there's nothing new under the sun, there might be another message. Perhaps time doesn't bring us truly new events, but even so, what a lovely time we've had together! Though time does not allow things to be permanent, that does not mean that those times are not filled with joy and holiness. I hope that we will always find those moments of holiness in the midst of all the repetitiveness and the impermanence of life.

Shir Ami: thank you for everything. I will treasure our time together. I hope that you all continue to grow Jewishly and continue to find community and meaning together. While I say good-bye to you, I know that the Jewish world is small enough that we will cross paths in the future. So until then: L'hitra'ot!

Rabbinic Intern Benj Fried



**Rabbinic Interns, 2014-1015**

Benj Fried [rabbi.benj@congsHIRAMI.org](mailto:rabbi.benj@congsHIRAMI.org)  
Julie Bressler [rabbi.julie@congsHIRAMI.org](mailto:rabbi.julie@congsHIRAMI.org)

## Adult Ed/Lifelong Learning

### Saturday, May 2, with Benj Fried

**Office Hours: Contact Benj to arrange a one-on-one meeting before the 4:30 adult ed class**

### **4:30 pm, ends with Havdallah**

#### ***Choices in Modern Jewish Theology***

Having trouble with the God concept? You might find that you're in good company. Come to this adult education, where we will talk about our feelings about the God idea, and we will explore some of the theologians that have come up with new and wacky ideas about what God is.

### **May 1-3**

**Rabbinic Intern Benj's last weekend with us.** There is a potluck dinner at 6:30 pm to say goodbye and to celebrate Benj's birthday.

### **May 8-10**

**Rabbinic Intern Julie Bressler** will be returning to Shir Ami next year. During her last weekend this year, Rabbi Julie will lead services on Friday night and she will officiate at Leah Brackin's Bat Mitzvah on May 9.

## School Notes

There was no school on April 4, but ten children were part of the community seder. Adults participated by reading different parts. Children were included by singing a song with Rabbi Benj. Gaby and Sean asked the four questions.

On April 11, the younger students learned about the ten commandments. The subject matter for the older children was more sensitive. Diana and the students had a very interesting and thoughtful conversation about racism. They also discussed anti-Semitism.

On Friday, April 17, Shir Ami had its second intergenerational family friendly Shabbat service. Preschool through third grade participated in the service by singing several songs/prayers. Jason and Hadasah read a poem. In the middle of the service, while the adults continued with the adult portion, the children went into the side room with Jan. Within twenty minutes she had them do an art project and practice the lines they had just come up with. When the children were welcomed back they stood in front of the congregation and described "What is Shabbat". They did a great job. Way to go Jan and Rabbi Benj.

On April 19, the topic was Israel. The preschool class learned to find it on the globe, decorated the flag and played a game using two Hebrew words. First graders made falafels and learned about the twelve tribes of Israel. The older children drew a map and learned about the country. Our Tot Talk kids listened to an ABC book about Israel, colored pictures and built some "temples" with recyclables.

## Tot Talk

**Last meeting, Sunday, May 17, 11:30 am**

Tot Talk is a free program that meets monthly during the Religious School year. Tot Talk provides a Jewish connection in a fun atmosphere for families with children under age 5.

Questions? Contact [Bonnie@congshirami.org](mailto:Bonnie@congshirami.org)

## 50ish Event Meeting

**Tuesday, May 5, 7 pm at Shir Ami**

Come one, come all! Please attend our next meeting on May 5, 7 PM, at Shir Ami.

We will be discussing venues, dates and committees. All input is valuable and appreciated.

Hope to see you there! Melanie and Barbara

## Shavuot Tikkun Leyl: Havdallah, Dessert and Study

**Saturday, May 23, with Diana Zankowsky and Barbara-Ann Lewis**

8:00 pm - Havdallah

8:30 pm - Dessert and Drinks

9:00 pm - 11:00 pm - 4 30-minute Learning sessions

It is traditional to welcome in Shavuot, the holiday where we celebrate receiving the Torah, by studying and learning together. As this year, Shavuot begins on Saturday night, we will begin by celebrating Havdallah together. Then we will have dessert (cheesecake? ice cream sundaes? and other dairy desserts) and drinks and socialize. We will begin our studying at 9 pm and will have 4 sessions during the evening. Please join us for what will be a very enjoyable evening.

## Saturday Night at the Movies

**Saturday, May 16, 7:30 pm at Shir Ami**

*The Human Resources Manager* (**Hebrew**: שליחותו של המשאבי אנוש, **translit.** *Shliḥuto shel Ha'Memuneh al Mash'abey Enosh*) is a 2010 Israeli **drama film** directed by [Eran Riklis](#). It was written by [Noah Stollman](#), based on the 2006 book *A Woman in Jerusalem* by [A. B. Yehoshua](#). The film tells the story of a bakery's human-resources manager (unnamed, like most of the film's characters) who reluctantly travels to [Eastern Europe](#) to bring the body of a deceased former employee, a recent immigrant to Israel, back to her family, in order to prevent a public-relations disaster for his company. The first half of the film is set in, and was filmed in, [Jerusalem](#), while the second half was filmed in [Romania](#), although the name of the country is never specified in the film. Please bring your favorite movie snack.

## Jewish Meditation Group

**Next meeting: Wednesday, May 27, 7:30 pm**

A group for the practice of Jewish meditation and spirituality. Relax, center yourself, and connect with the divine spark within! Held at Congregation Shir Ami the fourth Wednesday of each month. Includes guided and silent meditation, chanting, and sometimes movement. One hour long. No meditation or religious experience necessary. \$5 donation requested of non-members; free to members. Led by Julie Greenfield. Contact [Meditation@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Meditation@CongShirAmi.org)



# South Hayward Parish Annual Meeting & Garden Dedication

**Saturday, May 16th, 10:00 am**

South Hayward Parish will be holding its annual meeting and dedicating its community garden on Saturday May 16 starting at 10:00 a.m. The event will take place at the outreach center, which is located at **27287 Patrick Avenue in Hayward**. In addition to the garden dedication, SHP staff will present program reports, and we will elect officers for the coming year. At its April meeting, the Board recommended re-election of the current officers, who are Daryl Berman, president, Keith Burnett (community representative), Vice-president, Terri Owen (Starr King), Treasurer, and myself, Secretary. All Shir Ami congregants are members of SHP, so we would be thrilled to have you participate in the program.

- Tom Spitzer

# Judaica Products Available

In lieu of a gift shop, we have access to Israeli-made Judaica products. Apex Trading Company, a wholesale company based in Oregon, currently has a sale on Passover items. If you wish you had another seder or matzah plate or a special cup for Miriam, take a look at what Apex Trading Company has to offer. Also, their Judaica items make lovely Bar/Bat Mitzvah, wedding gifts and other special occasion gifts!

Send your orders to Barbara Heimowitz ([bheimowitz@aol.com](mailto:bheimowitz@aol.com)) She will place one order on May 4, so hurry to place your order! Shipping costs will be added to the price you see online.

Here's the website: <http://www.israelwholesale.com/>

Use the **user name: Israel** and **password: apex** to enter the site.

# T'ai Chi Chih/Qi Gong

**Tuesdays, 5-6:30 pm at Shir Ami**

Cost: \$10 each session (\$5 for Shir Ami members)  
A 12-week class with David Schulberg. (Drop-ins welcome). For more information contact [David.Schulberg@comcast.net](mailto:David.Schulberg@comcast.net).

# Yahrzeits (as of 04/20/15)

## **May 1, 2015**

Verla Becker, active early member of Shir Ami  
Gordon Greenfield, father of Julie Greenfield

## **May 8, 2015**

Morris Berman, father of Daryl Berman  
Harriet Cohn, grandmother of Ruth Hartman  
Nikki Harris, cousin of Nate Einbund  
Kevin Keil, husband of Danielle Keil, father of Sarah, Gabriella and James,  
and son-in-law of Vicky Sapper  
Hyman Abraham Rebotsky, grandfather of Jonathan Zimmerman  
Harold Small, uncle of Toni Schulberg, and former member of Shir Ami

## **May 29, 2015**

Lisa Sheryl Barth, niece of Melanie Einbund  
George Berenstein, father of Judy Ganz  
Lilian Theil Black, mother of Melanie Einbund  
Sarah Blank, mother of Sam Blank  
Anne Firestone, mother of Bill Firestone  
Doris Greenfield, mother of Julie Greenfield  
Arthur Kramer, father of Marion Kramer  
Robert Kranz, father of Sam Kranz  
Samuel Manton Thiel, grandfather of Melanie Einbund  
Harriet Troy, mother of Nancy Storch

## **Kaddish List (those who have died during the past 11 months)**

Hillie Levine, charter member and mainstay of Shir Ami for many years  
Beatrice Dombrower, mother of Jan Dombrower  
Lorraine Golembo, step-mother of Sharon Golembo  
Harry Yoseph Mitchell, brother of Helen Markus

## Prayer Books for the High Holidays



Congregation Shir Ami will be purchasing new prayer books for our High Holy Days services. This new machzor, called **Mishkan HaNefesh**, will have modern and gender-equality content, similar to our current Shabbat prayer book (Mishkan T'filah) and an evolution from the High Holy Days machzor we've been using for several years, Gates of Repentance. It will contain updated translations, elucidating essays, rich commentary, and a beautiful selection of poetry. Mishkan HaNefesh provides an environment for those of all backgrounds to find meaning in the High Holy Days.

For a limited time, members and friends of Shir Ami have the opportunity to sponsor one or more of these two-volume sets (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Each regular print set may be sponsored for a donation of \$50; large print and pulpit editions are also available for sponsorship. Each volume of the set may be dedicated separately (or both may have the same dedication) and the donor may choose the message. Mishkan T'filah was also underwritten by our members and friends in this manner. Your donation is a great way to recognize important people and events in your life and a legacy to pass on to future generations at Shir Ami.

To sponsor a set of Mishkan HaNefesh prayer books, please fill out and send in the form on the next page. For questions please contact [mishkan@congshirami.org](mailto:mishkan@congshirami.org), or call Jon at 510-220-3345.

## Mishkan HaNefesh – continued

**Minimum donations (# available): Regular Set - \$50 (85), Large Print Set - \$75 (15), Pulpit Set - \$100 (4), Music Edition - \$150 (1)**

### Inscription suggestions:

In Honor Of... Friends, Teachers, Rabbis, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation,  
Wedding, Anniversary, Baby Naming, Graduation, Ordination, Birthdays  
In Memory Of... Family Members, Lost Friends, (deceased) Public Figures

### **Examples:**

Dedicated by Jon Zimmerman In Honor Of the 50th Wedding Anniversary of Ruth & Walter Zimmerman

Dedicated by the Lamnin Family In Honor Of the Ordination of Rabbi Suzy Stone

Dedicated by Jon Zimmerman In Memory Of Grandfather Hyman Rebotsky

*To sponsor a set of Mishkan HaNefesh prayer books, please fill out and send in the form below by **May 15, 2015:***

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To: HHD Prayer Book, c/o Congregation Shir Ami  
P.O. Box 2099, Castro Valley, CA 94546

Enclosed is a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ set(s) of Mishkan HaNefesh  
(for multiple sets, please include as many types & inscriptions as appropriate)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Set Type (Regular/Large Print/Pulpit/Music): \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription #1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Inscription #2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Inscription #3 (for large print set): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

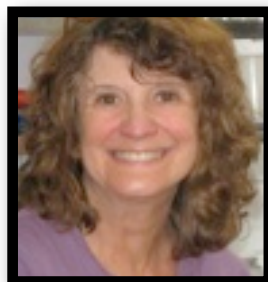


# Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh

## UPCOMING ROSH CHODESH-

We will bring in the month of Sivan on **Wednesday, May 20th at 7:30 pm** at Congregation Shir Ami.

Sara and Marlene Lamnin will host a fun game night. Look to your email for further information as the date nears.



## ROSH CHODESH RECAP

### More details on ROSH CHODESH NISSAN:

In March, a great group gathered to honor the memory of Jan's mother, Beatrice Dombrower.

There was a Chinese food potluck, Judy Garland music, and memories of Jan's mother. There were readings and stories about Beatrice as well as a poster board of pictures. Jan wishes to thank the Sisterhood and Valerie Goldman, Sharon Golembo, and Helene Paz for their great effort in putting such a nice evening together.

We read about Nissan and the importance of Miriam during the crossing of the red sea and exodus from Egypt. She was the keeper of the water and support to the women of that time.

### ROSH CHODESH IYAR

The women gathered at Aran's Paint and Glaze in Castro Valley to create a beautiful plaque for Shir Ami's 50th anniversary. It turned out spectacular with it's multi colored glass. It will be fused and then presented to the congregation.

After, we enjoyed a spread of Mediterranean snacks and drink. The program consisted of bringing in the new month of Iyar and honoring Israeli Independence Day.

Thank you to Melanie Einbund and Barbara Heimowitz for putting together this unique and creative evening.



For more information on Sisterhood/Rosh Chodesh, contact Jan Dombrower [Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org](mailto:Sisterhood@CongShirAmi.org)



*From Sibling Rivalry to Sibling Revelry: Tuesday, May 19, 7:00 pm*



# From Sibling Rivalry to Sibling Revelry

**Tuesday**  
**5/19**  
**7pm**

**Parenting**  
**Strategies**  
**that Work**

**Manage**  
**Meltdowns**  
**with Ease**

**End Power**  
**Struggles**  
**Gracefully**

Raise Kids that Get Along Now, and Later

Live in a Peaceful Home, Not a War Zone

Handle Every Sibling Fight with Grace

Learn to Create Flexibility, Cooperation  
Compassion, Groundrules and Ultimately  
Deep Sibling Bonds

**Rachel Sklar, MSW**  
Founder, ViaParenting  
Parent Coach & Strategist

Dynamic speaker and parenting expert, Rachel Sklar is one of the Bay Area's most incredible resources for parents who long for an easier life with kids. Rachel's approach to parenting is heart-centered, no-nonsense and fully customizable to the individual strengths and challenges of your family.

**Congregation Shir Ami**  
**4529 Malabar Ave, Castro Valley**

**Register (\$20)**  
**[ViaSiblingRivalry.eventbrite.com](http://ViaSiblingRivalry.eventbrite.com)**



Parenting Tip #1: Visit [viaparenting.com](http://viaparenting.com) to learn more.

## *Community of Practice*

Editor's note: Bonnie Frey and Harriet Skelly were asked to write a blog piece for ReformJudaism.org on Shir Ami's experience in implementing Community of Practice ideas. Here is a draft of what they wrote:

### *CoP Blog Post*

In 2013 Congregation Shir Ami in Castro Valley, Ca. was probably at our lowest membership in the 15 years I had been a member. We had implemented a new low cost members' dues structure thinking that might help increase the membership. At that time Rabbi Jacobs visited the Bay Area and spoke with the local congregational presidents about "going outside the walls", audacious hospitality and relational Judaism. I was intrigued by his language but didn't really get it. I was stuck on how to find the unaffiliated Jews in an unincorporated town such as Castro Valley. A few months after the meeting with Rabbi Jacobs I was "manning" Shir Ami's booth at the Castro Valley Pride Festival. An interfaith lesbian couple with a 9 month old son approached me and was looking for a place where they could bring their son to learn about being Jewish. I had to tell them we didn't have a program for children under 5. I did encourage them to come check us out anyway and gave them our schedule of activities. Right there and then I decided we had to create something for that family!

That incident in July, 2013 led me to understand what our target population was. Since we are an aging community and had very few students in our Religious and Hebrew school I knew we needed to bring in the families with young children. In September 2013 I learned of the formation of the Communities of Practice (CoP) and applied to the Engaging Families with Young Children. At that time we had 49 member families with 9 school aged children and we wanted to learn how to find and attract unaffiliated and diverse families with young children.

I had the idea to offer a once a month free program for children under 5 years old and their parents/guardians that would be fun, educational and provide a peer group

for this population. I asked one of my Membership co-chairs to join me in this experiment and she agreed to go to Chicago for the kick off of the CoP. She returned with copious notes and presented to Shir Ami's board of directors. The board gave us their blessing to go ahead and provide the program that I had envisioned. They were a bit hesitant about offering anything for free – that was really out of the box. We asked a few members that were parents of young children (and were in the targeted population) to brainstorm with us – and Tot Talk was born.

Through the CoP we learned how to market ourselves, we used the URJ's free marketing materials and advertised on our website home page – check it out – [www.CongShirAmi.org](http://www.CongShirAmi.org) - how can you resist that picture of the baby sucking on a piece of Matzo???

Each month Tot Talk is scheduled for 1 hour on a Sunday when the regular school is in session and a Rabbinic Intern is present. The session starts at 11:30 am, the time the school breaks for oneg. This allows the kids to interact with the big kids and the parents to check out the environment and mingle with each other before the session starts. At about 11:45 am we start our session. The parents/guardians are required to be with their child and participate in the session. We sing a welcoming song, read a short story (usually on the theme of the day) and then have a hands-on project – usually making something edible! We get a lot of our ideas from ReformJudaism.org. A handout with information regarding the session's topic and links to related topics is given to the families to take home. We have had from 1 tot up to 5 tots in any given session with ages ranging from 9 months to 4 years old. The first family to attend was that interfaith lesbian couple with their son! Since the start of the program in January 2014 we have had six of the families join our congregation. Our school has grown to 17 students (not including the Tot Talk children) and our membership is now at 65 memberships.

I attribute some of this growth to the Tot Talk program. I attribute the rest of this growth to learning how to market our self (which we learned from the CoP), to go "outside the walls" and meet people where they are. They are not just going to show up on our doorstep. But when they do they are greeted with audacious hospitality!