

Temple Beth El^{Electronic} News

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Kislev-Tevet 5770

December 2009

Thank You

- ✧ To Barb Alexander for working so hard to put together our lay service. Todah Rabah!
- ✧ To Randy Sirk for delivering the invocation at the Dubuque City Council meeting, and also to Randy for sponsoring the Hanukkah display (D&R Foods) as part of Hillcrest's Reflections in the Park. How wonderful that we, too, are represented!

Sisterhood

Tomorrow (Saturday, December 12), Sisterhood (Women of Reform Judaism) is sponsoring a Hanukkah High Tea and Havdalah event from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the temple. All women affiliated with the temple are invited to participate. RSVP to Emily Kruse (kruseea@hotmail.com or 563-588-6436). Please bring non-food items for the food pantry, such as diapers, soap, and even pet food.

And congratulations to Emily Kruse who was elected Sisterhood President! Remember, all women affiliated with the Temple are welcome to join Sisterhood. Contact Emily, Phyllis Garfield (phyllisgarfield@hotmail.com), or Rebecca Gottlieb (gottlieb@uwplatt.edu) for more information.

Hanukkah Service

Our temple Hanukkah celebration will take place on Friday, December 18, at **6:00 PM**, followed by a dinner hosted by Randy Sirk. He is serving matzah ball soup (vegetarian) and latkes, so this is a DAIRY meal. Please bring a vegetable side dish, a salad, or a dessert to share with the rest of our temple community. Bring your menorahs and we will have a group candle lighting.

And Happy Hanukkah to everyone! Tonight is the first night!

Mitzvah Opportunity—Save the Date

Once again, Temple Beth El is going to volunteer at "Reflections in the Park" on December 24. This mitzvah brings us great community recognition and helps Hillcrest Family Services. Without our help, they would probably have to close the light show on one of the top money-raising evenings of the year. Rebecca Gottlieb is our temple organizer for this event. Contact Rebecca for more information or to volunteer. Rebecca will bring a sign-up sheet to service next Friday. It's a fun opportunity, so please sign up!

Schedule Change

The date for our Visitor's Service has been changed to April 9, 2010. The updated calendar appears at the end of this newsletter. Please note this change.

Congregational Meeting

The Temple Beth El Congregational Meeting will take place on Sunday, April 11, at 1:00 pm. Anyone who is interested in serving on the Temple Board of Directors should contact Sheila Rudin (sgrudin@mchsi.com) before then as the new slate is voted on at that time.

The Dubuque Food Pantry Still Needs Our Help

Please bring donations of peanut butter and jelly when you come to services. These items are in high demand because of the number of families with children served by the Food Pantry.

Reminders

This year, the worship committee (usually Rebecca) will be arranging aliyot and other honors in advance of the rabbi's visits. Please call or email Rebecca if you would like to volunteer, especially to celebrate a special date, or if you will have offspring visiting who should included, etc. If you do not volunteer, you will get called on eventually. ☺

- ✧ To volunteer to host an oneg contact Fern Reinstein:
threeamstamper@yahoo.com
- ✧ To volunteer to host the rabbi for dinner contact Randy Sirk: randysir@aol.com
- ✧ To volunteer to host an adult study contact Barbara Alexander:
alexgalena@aol.com

Mitzvah Moment

Mazel tov to Ben Goldberg, who is leaving on a Birthright trip in a few days!!

Remember to submit your "Mitzvah Moment" and "Jewish Vacation" items to Kate Scheinman (kscheinman@aol.com) to be included in upcoming newsletters. Don't be shy!

From Rabbi Stephanie

Every year I look forward to the familiar traditions of our Chanukah service and celebration – the uplifting melodies, the flickering lights of the *hanukkah*, the smell of frying latkes. Yet the service described by Rabbi Jerry Brown in the following piece is certainly provocative, and I share it for your reflection during the upcoming holiday.

With every best wish for a joyous holiday of rededication filled with warmth and light –
L'shalom,
Rabbi Stephanie Alexander

Chanukah means "dedication." The holiday commemorates the Maccabees' cleaning out the pagan statues and altar that Antiochus had ordered brought into the Temple in Jerusalem and rededicating the Temple for Jewish worship. America is a land where freedom of religion has permitted our Jewish community to thrive as never before. It is also a land where all sorts of idols invite us to exercise our freedom by leaving our Jewish values behind. The story and message of Chanukah—the real story and message, not the tale of the oil—would seem to speak volumes to modern American Jews, if only we would bring that story and message to them.

Some years ago, I decided to do just that. Right before the Friday night service during Chanukah, I removed the Torah scrolls from the ark and replaced them with dozens of oversized \$100 bills and a poster featuring a giant American Express card. Elsewhere on the *bimah*, big posters featuring prominent rock and sports stars were prominently displayed. The Shabbat candlesticks were replaced by a portable television set. When the congregants entered, no mention was made of any of this. We simply opened the special Chanukah service booklet I had prepared and began by calling two of our youth groupers up to kindle “the sacred light of television, source of all knowledge and values.” Another youth grouper then led us in sanctifying “Coke—the Real Thing,” only to be interrupted by another who protested that it should be “Pepsi—the Choice of a New Generation,” instead. A third teen snootily dismissed the first two, declaring Perrier to be the only beverage for “truly discriminating tastes.”

And so the service continued for four pages as we “idolized” the materialism and commercialism of so much of American culture and society. Once again, I stopped the service and asked those present what they thought of it so far. We spent a few minutes talking about how the “idols” that surround us in America had defiled our sanctuary and service. I then asked, “Don’t you think it’s time we cleansed the temple, as the Maccabees of old did?” After receiving a rousing “Yes!” from the congregation, I invited our young people to come up and dispose of the “idols,” which they did with considerable energy and enthusiasm, tearing down and destroying the posters they might otherwise have coveted. As the final vestiges of the “idols” were being removed, the cantor and I entered the sanctuary from the rear, singing as we came and leading five of our youth groupers who bore the *sifrei Torah* that had been removed from the ark before the service. The feelings of genuine joy and celebration that filled the sanctuary are difficult to describe. The intensity of emotion even took me by surprise. There was no doubt that everyone present that evening knew the story of the oil before he or she came, but each person left that service with a visceral understanding of the more profound message of Chanukah and a sense of having truly experienced a moment of “rededication.”

Rabbi Jerry Brown is the spiritual leader of Temple Ahavat Shalom, Northridge, CA.

Upcoming Events

- ✧ **Friday, December 18th @ 6:00 pm** – Hanukkah service and dinner
- ✧ **Saturday, December 19th @ 10:00 am** – Family School
- ✧ **Saturday, December 19th @ 11:30 am (at temple)** – [New York City trip info session!!](#)

This very important meeting is for any and everyone thinking about joining Temple Beth El on our exciting congregational trip to NYC this coming spring – April 23 – 26, 2010. Together we will look at possible itineraries, logistics and costs. Of course, all of the above are greatly dependent upon the number of us traveling. Therefore, [please email Rabbi Stephanie \(\[stephalex75@gmail.com\]\(mailto:stephalex75@gmail.com\)\) if you are planning on/thinking about joining us on the trip.](#) We also invite you to be in touch with any former members with whom you keep in touch who might wish to join us, as well. The more the merrier!

- ✧ **Saturday, December 19th @ 7:00 pm (at the Landau’s)** – Adult Study: A look at the two major initiatives put forth at the 70th Biennial Conference of the Union for Reform Judaism: Embracing Technology & Making Ethical Food Choices.



Service and Mitzvah Schedule for 5770

(Updated 12-11-09)

NOTE: Rabbi Stephanie has brought a new dimension to our temple by offering a slew of activities on the weekends she is here. The schedule below does NOT include those specific activities. Refer to each newsletter for the specifics of an upcoming weekend.

Friday, December 18...6:00pm Hanukkah service	(dinner hosted by Randy Sirk with menorah lighting to follow)
Saturday, December 19...7:00pm adult study	dinner: Gottlieb, study: Alexanders
Thursday, December 24...5:00pm to 9:30pm	REFLECTIONS IN THE PARK
Friday, January 15, 2010...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: TBD oneg: Garfields
Saturday, January 16...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: TBD
Friday, February 12...6:00pm Purim service	(dinner hosted by Jeannine and Lou Sandler to follow)
Saturday, February 13...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: TBD
Friday, March 12...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: TBD, Group oneg
Saturday, March 13...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: TBD
Friday, April 9...7:00pm Visitor's service (Passover)	dinner: TBD, oneg: Dyrkes
Saturday, April 10...7:00pm adult study	dinner: Gottlieb, study: Gottlieb
Sunday, April 11...1:00pm	CONGREGATIONAL MEETING at the Temple
April 23-26: Trip to New York City	
Friday, May 14...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: TBD, oneg: Mikel & Pearce
Saturday, May 15...7:00pm adult study	dinner: TBD, study: TBD
Friday, June 4...7:00pm Shabbat service	dinner: TBD, oneg: Gottlieb
Saturday, June 5... Time TBD	End-of-Year Adult Social