

# Our History



## ORIGINS:

### Beth Haverim & Reform Temple of Suffern-Shir Shalom

In October 1970, a small group of families responded to a notice in a local newspaper to become a part of a new Reform Congregation in Bergen County, New Jersey. In February 1971, twenty-two members adopted a constitution. In August 1976, the community chose a Hebrew name, Beth Haverim, meaning “House of Friends.” In 1996, Beth Haverim acquired property and built on our present location. The building was expanded in 2001.

Reform Temple of Suffern-Shir Shalom meaning “Song of Peace” was founded in 1971 with 10 families from Rockland and Orange Counties in New York and Bergen County, New Jersey. The synagogue purchased its original building in 1976, and expanded to a new sanctuary, which was completed in 1987. The building was expanded once again in 1993.

## OUR FUTURE:

### Beth Haverim Shir Shalom

In the summer of 2007, the two congregations merged to become Beth Haverim Shir Shalom, and today we are thriving. From small beginnings we continue to grow as a House of Friends. From a modest start, we ever seek to be a Song of Peace. Sharing, learning, giving, enjoying, we take all that Reform Judaism has to offer.



# *Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman*



Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman comes to Beth Haverim Shir Shalom with eight years of experience as a solo rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami in Salt Lake City, Utah where she served since 2010. Prior to that, she served as assistant rabbi in Buffalo, New York. She received her undergraduate degree from University of Virginia and went on to study Hebrew at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel.

She was ordained in 2007 from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Rabbi Ilana is a third generation rabbi. Her grandfather Rabbi Sylvan Schwartzman (z”l) was at the forefront of Reform Jewish education and her father Rabbi Joel Schwartzman has served as an Air Force chaplain and a congregational rabbi.

Rabbi Ilana has lived in places far and wide, including Germany, Greece, Israel and many states within the U.S. She is thrilled to put down roots here in New Jersey with her husband, Art Kieres, and their daughter, Sabine.

Rabbi Ilana views the contemporary synagogue as a home for prayer, spirituality, social action, study, leadership and engagement and is devoted to these pursuits in her rabbinate. In addition to a love for Judaism and Jewish texts, she has a great love for people and their stories. Her joy lies in the interplay between intellectual Judaism and personal relationships. She also believes that music is a powerful vehicle through which we can connect to each other and God. Her warm, approachable personality and generosity of spirit, make her a wonderful fit for BHSS and is a blessing to our community.

# Cantor David Perper



David Perper has served Beth Haverim Shir Shalom since 2006 as Cantor and Music Director. His life is focused on teaching, leading inspiring worship experiences, community service and most importantly, his loving wife, Cantor Faith Steinsnyder.

Services here at BHSS are filled with music and the voices of a very special faith community. *A house of friends* singing their *song of peace*.

This congregation also enjoys the glorious beauty of its very skilled all-volunteer adult choir under the direction of Cantor Perper. The choir gives time every week to rehearse and improve, while having a ton of fun, laughing and singing gorgeous Jewish music. Our service melodies range from the most recent trending camp melodies to beloved classics. Worship at BHSS is what you are looking for...inspiration through sheer beauty, rhythm and joy.

Cantor holds degrees from Montgomery College and The Catholic University of America, as well as The Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion's Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music, and has served communities in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Toronto, Canada, and Potomac, Maryland.

Since receiving cantorial ordination in 1996, Cantor Perper has been a featured performer at the Reform movement's biennial convention. He was soloist with the Lewandowsky Choir at the Amsterdam Jewish Music Festival, and is chosen consistently to sing at concerts and master classes at The American Conference of Cantors (Reform) and The Cantors Assembly (Conservative) national conventions, and the North American Jewish Choral Music Festival.

David is an accomplished operatic lyric tenor. He has performed major roles in regional houses here in the U.S., and has performed in Israel, Austria, Germany and Italy. He was invited to sing in Poland at the Krakow Jewish Music Festival, the largest festival of Jewish Music in the world.

We hope to inspire you through sacred sound. Awaken the spirit and Let It Sing!

The cantor's office is always open to your questions, interests, melodies, or concerns.

# *Our President, Judy Teich*



I am delighted and honored to be beginning my term as president of this wonderful community that many of us call our second home, Beth Haverim Shir Shalom.

At BHSS we experience the richness of a multi-generational community that embraces all who enter our synagogue, including interfaith and LGBTQI families, and anyone looking for spiritual tranquility and sanctuary when the world gets too complicated and we just need to find a place for peace and acceptance.

Why have I chosen to serve BHSS as president? My Jewish roots are strong. Temple life and being Jewish has always been important to me. I grew up at a Reform temple in Rockland County. In high school I was a member of Young Judaea. When my kids were young, my family joined Reform Temple of Suffern Shir Shalom and I quickly became involved in leadership. I even taught Hebrew school! At BHSS, I met my partner Lois.

My involvement in Jewish life has enriched my life in countless ways!

I am grateful to be a member of BHSS. We are fortunate to have incredible clergy to guide us and a terrific staff of individuals that keep our synagogue humming. Our community is dedicated to the never-ending process of Jewish learning, repairing the world and spiritual fulfillment.

So join us and find me. I would love to learn about your why.

May we go from strength to strength.

# Worship



## *Ivdu et Adonai B'Simcha* - "Serve God with joy"

This is the hallmark of our congregational worship experience. We seek to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for members and guests alike.

Friday night Shabbat Services are celebrated each week, led by our clergy. The first Friday night each month a Family Service is held. At this abbreviated service, our liturgy is especially child friendly and all congregants and guests celebrating birthdays in that month are honored. After Friday night services, members and guests enjoy an Oneg Shabbat. When one of our children becomes a bar or bat mitzvah, our community celebrates at Saturday morning Shabbat services at 10 a.m. We enjoy singing the liturgy using both traditional and contemporary melodies led by Cantor David Perper. The balanced use of English and Hebrew makes our services both inspiring and understandable.

We celebrate High Holy Days, festivals and holidays at their appointed times in the Jewish calendar. Other special services include a Music Service, in which Cantor Perper teaches congregants new melodies to songs and prayers and an annual Service of Healing, which was created to provide a time of peaceful meditation and prayer for those in need of physical or emotional healing, perhaps because of an illness or the loss of a loved one. These special services promote the feeling of community and intimacy that really sets Beth Haverim Shir Shalom apart.



# Our Community

## SISTERHOOD

The Sisterhood of Beth Haverim Shir Shalom contributes financially, educationally, socially and spiritually to our congregation in a myriad of ways. Sisterhood collaborates with other groups within BHSS and our women donate their time, energy and funds to assist in anyway they can. Often, they support the Social Action Committee by providing funds for womens' shelters and helping out at a Soup Kitchen. They also support the work of BHSS's Ritual Committee by funding the purchase of new prayerbooks. Our "sisters" are generous contributors to BHSS building campaigns and they pay for special gifts for the synagogue every year, including, in recent years, a *tzedakah* box, a grand piano, and new chairs for our Social Hall. Sisterhood proudly donates thousands of dollars each year in support of our youth, which enables our teens to attend Jewish camp and leadership development events. Sisterhood welcomes all women - BHSS members and non-members! Join us and participate in our social events and programs including our annual Hanukkah party, Miriam Seder, Sisterhood Shabbat Service, and so much more! Join our diverse group of women of all ages and stages! It's a terrific way to have fun and make lifelong friends at BHSS while doing good deeds for our community at the same time.

## BROTHERHOOD

The Brotherhood of Beth Haverim Shir Shalom is dedicated to serve men of our community and their families by offering programs of interest as well as social action, community involvement and alignment with all groups within BHSS. We have men only events, family events, and joint events with other groups. The mission of BHSS Brotherhood is to repair the world, one mitzvah at a time. Check us out on the BHSS home page, or email us at [president@bhssbrotherhood.org](mailto:president@bhssbrotherhood.org).

## YOUTH GROUPS

Beth Haverim Shir Shalom's youth groups for children in grades 3-12, offers a variety of social and community service-oriented activities. BHSSTY (our 9th - 12th grade youth group) is part of the North American Federation of Temple Youth - Garden Empire Region (NFTY-GER), an organization which includes approximately 50 youth groups affiliated with Reform congregations in New York and New Jersey. Directors of Informal Youth Programming Brittany & Aaron Punim advise BHSSTY and also arrange and run programming for our Junior Youth Group (6th - 8th graders) and Menschmakers (3rd - 5th graders.) Have a kindergartner, 1st or 2nd grader? There is youth programming for them too!

# Our Community

## SOCIAL ACTION

Social Action is an integral part of our community. There are many ways for members to participate in *tikkun olam*. As a Congregation, we always have ongoing support of the Center for Food Action (CFA) and we have a community garden that raises organic vegetables for CFA and the Suffern Soup Kitchen. Many of the organizations that are part of the Congregation such as Sisterhood, Brotherhood and Youth Group hold several Social Action events every year. There is one organization whose sole purpose is social action, the **Michelle Mitzvah Group**. MMG supports Oasis in Paterson, Children and Family Aid Society, CFA, the Suffern Soup Kitchen, holiday visits to Blythedale Children's Hospital, and MMG participates with the Jewish Federation on projects such as Mitzvah Day and Good Deeds Day.

## LIFELONG LEARNING

Jewish learning is lifelong endeavor. To that end, Lifelong Learning is dedicated to bringing the congregation opportunities to continue our membership's learning through a variety of experiences, programs, and levels of commitment. We offer adult education, scholar in residence, trips, Torah study, and other congregational programming. We collaborate with the Union of Reform Judaism and Jewish Federation of Northern New Jersey to access a variety of learning resources and programs.

## OUTREACH

Beth Haverim Shir Shalom welcomes people from all backgrounds to learn more about Reform Judaism. From courses such as "Taste of Judaism," and "Introduction to Judaism" to an Interfaith Couples Discussion Group, BHSS's Outreach programming varies from year to year. To find out about what's coming up this year, please contact our Outreach chairperson or our clergy for details.

## THE CHOIRS

The **Adult Choir**, comprised of over 20 singers and growing, performs at special events during the year. This includes High Holidays, Purim, Simchat Torah, Shabbat Shirah, and the annual Reform choral festival. The choir rehearses once a week under the direction of Cantor Perper. The **BHSS Youth Singers** is available for students beginning in grade 3. They rehearse as needed with Cantor Perper and sing at many of our family services. In addition, they participate in the Junior regional choral festival and practice community service through their visits to children's hospitals.

# Our Religious School



Rebecca Bernstein McVeigh  
Director of Education

The mission of our school is to graduate young adults who have the tools they need to form their own Jewish identity. Our aim is to enable families to pass their own traditions “from generation to generation” and help them build strong bonds within their community and with the world, both Jewish and secular. We hope our students will feel comfortable in their Judaism wherever they go in their lives – and above all, to be “mensches,” good people.

Beth Haverim Shir Shalom (BHSS) offers a weekly religious school program for children in Kindergarten through twelfth grade. We take pride in working with families to strengthen each child’s sense of Jewish identity. In the holiday-themed PreK class our four year-olds and five year-olds not yet in Kindergarten explore the holidays with fingerplay, cooking, stories, and crafts. Beginning with Kindergarten and continuing through Grade Twelve, students acquire Hebrew skills and also learn the rich tradition, history, and culture that help them to become informed Reform Jewish adults. They participate in *Tikkun Olam* (healing the world) in the classroom and through our congregation’s social action programming.

Our program includes the Kadimah (“moving forward”) program for Grades Seven through Twelve. In Kadimah the teens discuss hot topics, argue moral issues, cook Jewish foods, dance, sing, meditate, and learn conversational Hebrew, to name a few of the Monday night options. During their tenth grade year, they have the opportunity to travel with their peers to Washington, D.C. to put their social action knowledge to use at the Religious Action Center.

As a jewel in the crown of our educational programming, the Family School stands as a testament to what we believe in. In the Family School, each one (adult and child) is a student, and each one is a teacher. When these families leave our building, they have had richer, deeper conversations about what their Judaism means to them. And these conversations continue – into the rest of Sunday, into the rest of the week, and into the rest of their lives.

Our religious school year runs from **September through May**; classes meet as follows:

Sunday - **Grades 3-6 Family School:** 9-11:30 am; **Traditional Grade 6:** 9-11:30 am

Monday - **Grades K-2:** 4-5:30 pm; **Traditional Grade 3:** 4-6 pm;

**Preschool:** 4-5:30 pm (as scheduled), **Kadimah:** 6:45-8:30 pm

Tuesday - **Traditional Grades 4 and 5:** 4-6:30 pm

To enroll your child in grades 3 - 7, you must be a member of BHSS. Non-members may enroll children in grades Kindergarten, first, and second grade, as well as grades 8 - 12; members may enroll children in Kindergarten, first, or second grade for no cost. For membership information, please call the office at 201-512-1983. For more information about religious school, email [schoolatbethhav@optonline.net](mailto:schoolatbethhav@optonline.net) or call our Director of Education

Along with her husband Rod and sons Andrew, Alex, and Ari, Rebecca Bernstein McVeigh joined our congregation in 1997. After serving in various leadership roles as a volunteer, she was asked to lead the religious school in a professional capacity, and is not only in charge of our school, but works with our clergy to plan b’nei mitzvah preparation and informal learning for all ages and stages at BHSS. Rebecca was raised on Cape Cod, graduated with a degree in Education from Simmons College in Boston, and has lived for the past 36 years with her family in Oakland, New Jersey. (Although she remains an avid Red Sox fan!)