

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 Barry Diamond



Rabbi Diamond is a native of Southern California, having grown up in Huntington Beach and Newport Beach. Long before guitars were popular in Jewish worship services, Rabbi Diamond's childhood congregation sang the melodies of Shlomo Carlebach & Debbie Friedman, inspiring him to learn guitar and become a song leader at URJ Camp Swig in Northern California. His musical path led him to the rabbinical program at Hebrew Union College where classes in Jewish education were so energizing that he chose to focus the first years of his rabbinate to leading the education programs of large congregations, including fourteen years at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas.

Because of his love of congregational life and a desire to contribute in diverse ways, Rabbi Diamond became interested in strengthening non-profit organizations. After receiving advanced training in board governance, he opened a consulting practice focused on strengthening non-profit boards of directors while continuing to serve a congregation part-time as their rabbi. This experience beautifully harmonized with his rabbinate, allowing him to guide temple boards to renewed vision, in addition to his other rabbinical duties.

Rabbi Diamond now combines his interest in strengthening congregations and his love of congregational life through his work as an interim rabbi. First in Houston, TX, then Thousand Oaks, CA and Coralville, IA, he is very excited to be joining Temple Beth Haverim Shir Shalom.

Rabbi Diamond and his wife, Sandy, have a blended family with five children. Oldest son Nate, and his wife Nancy, middle son Micah, and his wife Katie, and daughter Abby, all live in Seattle. Twins Richard & Coco are recent college graduates both working in California. His wife, Sandy, is a school administrator and is looking forward to visiting Beth Haverim Shir Shalom as often as possible. They also have a dog, a cat, and a Blue & Gold Macaw.

Cantor David Perper



David Perper has served Beth Haverim Shir Shalom for over ten years 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 blended faith community. A house of friends singing a song of peace, which more than reflects the name of this blessed institution. Together with the wonderfully blended voices of our clergy, there are the sounds of guitars and piano. 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. His first opportunity to lead part of a worship service came at Washington Hebrew Congregation in Washington, DC. He then went on to serve 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 Gala Concert of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations Biennial Convention, he was soloist with the Lewandowsky Choir at the Amsterdam Jewish Music Festival, and been 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 in upstate New York.

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. His audience of 15,000 was quite enthusiastic. The very next day, David sang at the Krakow Philharmonic Hall in "The Great American Songbook" in honor of the 4th of July.

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.

B'Shalom,

—Cantor David Perper

Our President



I am honored to once again serve as president of Beth Haverim Shir Shalom.

When my husband Matt and I made the decision to become members in 2004, we joined primarily to provide our children with a Jewish education. Finding a spiritual home for ourselves was not really in our thoughts, but in the 13 years that followed this synagogue has come to mean so much to us. The people within this building have been there to support our family in our everyday life as well as during times of our greatest joys and deepest sorrows.

Getting involved in the leadership of BHSS has never felt like a burden, but a blessing. I look forward to serving my second term as president as we navigate our rabbinic transition and continue our search for the BHSS's next settled spiritual leader.

It remains our mission at BHSS to be a spiritual, intellectual, and cultural center for our membership by creating worship and musical experiences that appeal to mind, heart, and soul; offering support at all life cycle events; providing meaningful education to members of all ages; producing programs which cultivate friendship, warmth, and kindness; fostering connections to the larger Jewish community as well as to people of other faiths; pursuing social justice; and perhaps most importantly, simply caring for one another.

If you are reading this as a prospective member, I hope you will take the time to explore and learn about all the BHSS has to offer. I encourage you to visit and meet with our Interim Rabbi Barry Diamond, Cantor David Perper, Educator Rebecca McVeigh and our Administrative Staff Iris Greenberg and Lisa Barrack. Our clergy and staff are the heart and soul of our congregation who go above and beyond each and every day to ensure that BHSS continues to thrive as a vibrant, welcoming community. Feel free to reach out to me or any of our trustees or officers using the links on the website.

-Jen Cole

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 beginning at 6:00 pm, 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.

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. Director of Informal Youth Programming Brittany Silverman advises BHSSTY and also arranges and runs programming for our Junior Youth Group (6th - 8th graders) and Menschmakers (3rd - 5th graders.)

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 **Junior Choir** 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



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 one-day-a-week 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 Monthly Preschool our four-year-old students explore the holidays with fingerplay, cooking, stories, and crafts. Beginning with Kindergarten and continuing through Grade Twelve, students learn not only the Hebrew reading that they will need to become Bar or Bat Mitzvah, but also the rich tradition, history, and culture that help them to become informed Reform Jewish adults living in today’s world. 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.

Engraved in our mission statement is our congregational aim for lifelong learning; we are “...dedicated to the never-ending process of Jewish learning.” 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 (parent 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 (monthly),

Kadimah: 6:45-8:30 pm

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

In order to enroll your child in grades K – 7, you must be a member of BHSS. For membership information, please call the office at 201-512-1983. For more information about religious school, email schoolatbethhav@optonline.net or call our educator, Rebecca McVeigh.



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 33 years with her family in Oakland, New Jersey. (Although she remains an avid Red Sox fan!)