

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. 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.



BETH HAVERIM SHIR SHALOM

Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman

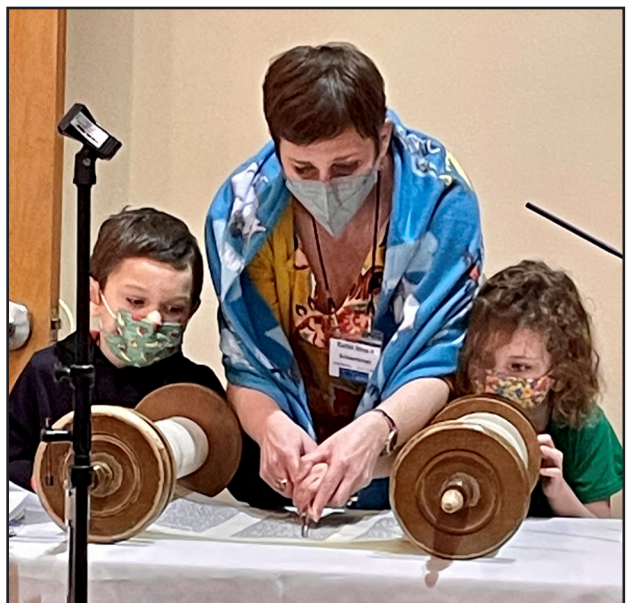


Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman comes to Beth Haverim Shir Shalom with eight years of experience as a solo rabbi of Congregation Kol Ami in Salt Lake City, Utah where she served since 2010. Prior to that, she served as assistant rabbi in Buffalo, New York. She received her undergraduate degree from University 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.



Our President



Linda Ellman Schwartz
President

When Linda Ellman Schwartz and her husband David joined BHSS in 2009 with their then young children, they were excited to find a warm, down to earth community for their family. They knew BHSS would be a place where they would be embraced and encouraged to grow, learn and explore as individuals and a family. The four of them have our own versions of what BHSS means to them but, without question, they all feel love and support that is sometimes hard to find in this crazy world, and it is so comforting.

Over the years Linda has participated in a variety of initiatives. She has always been impressed at the impact our committees make toward helping others. There is always something going on. The enthusiasm for *Tikkun Olam* and the genuine kind-hearted, earnest ways that people step up to help has really inspired her. People seem to find their strengths and the way they can be used to make a difference, and they spring into action. The spirit of helping those in need is what Linda loves most about BHSS.

Linda's hope is that everyone who enters our doors feels welcome and finds their own way to participate. She encourages you to share ideas that you may have about things you would like to see us do, by sending an email to lindas.bhss@gmail.com.

Linda and the whole BHSS team look forward to a great year and spending in-person time with all of you!!

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 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, and the balanced use of English and Hebrew makes our services both inspiring and understandable.

We celebrate High Holidays, festivals and holidays at their appointed times in the Jewish calendar. Other special services include a Music Service, in which congregants learn new melodies to songs and prayers and periodic Healing Services which 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.



Havdalah Retreat Service

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 any way they can. Often, they support the Social Action Committee by providing funds for women's shelters and helping out at a soup kitchen and they also support the work of BHSS by funding the purchase of new prayer books. 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 serving 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 offer a variety of social and community service-oriented activities in addition to running our Purim carnival and helping out with other BHSS, Sisterhood, and Brotherhood programming. Our 7th – 12th graders also participate in events run by other youth groups in our area. Director of Informal Youth Programming Samantha "Sam" Spencer advises our teens and also arranges and runs programming for our Menschmakers (3rd – 6th graders.)

LIBRARY

If you are a reader, our Library Committee is constantly sourcing a good read, and always ready with a review or suggestion of a book just for you. They hold fun events like Book and a Bagel, where the latest title is discussed with the group and guests when available.

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, and MMG participates with the Jewish Federation on projects such as Mitzvah Day and Good Deeds Day.

EDUCATION

Our Education Committee consists of a group of lay leaders, the director of education and rabbi to maintain the standards set forth in our mission statement. Among other things, the committee helps to create and enforce policies and provides classroom assistance where needed, as well as brainstorming all school initiatives and organizing volunteers for specific projects. In addition, the Education Committee works closely with faculty and lay leaders to establish standards for B'nai Mitzvah preparation.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Jewish learning is a 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 Federations of Northern New Jersey and Rockland to access a variety of learning resources and programs.

CHOIR/MUSIC

The Adult Choir performs at special events during the year. This includes High Holidays, Purim, Simchat Torah, Shabbat Shirah, and other holidays. The choir rehearses once a week under the direction of Jane Koch. Our Music Committee is always looking for new ways to showcase Jewish music in an entertaining and spiritual manner.

CARING

Whether it is an illness, death or other matters in which our congregants need a helping hand, the Caring Committee is at the ready to help. Volunteers are always welcome to cook a meal, offer a ride or even just make a simple call or visit to someone who could use a smile and encouraging word.

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 “*mensch*es,” good people. In addition, they will have the experience of belonging to a Jewish community that will support them as they grow into their Jewish adulthood.

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.

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.

All of us at BHSS feel that caring for our students and their families as we facilitate their journey towards celebrating b’nei mitzvah is our sacred obligation. Our rabbi, director of education, and office staff work in concert so that when your child leads their congregation in prayer on Shabbat morning, they are confident in their abilities and that you, their families, are prepared as well.

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 or call our Director of Education, 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 in 2003, 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 38 years with her family in Oakland, New Jersey. (Although she remains an avid Red Sox fan!)

Music



Brian Gelfand
Music Director

Brian Gelfand, Music Leader, partners with Rabbi Ilana on select Friday nights and for b'nei mitzvot on Saturday mornings.

Brian Gelfand is pianist, vocalist, and songwriter active in pop, jazz and Jewish music with a performing career that spans over 35 years and venues all over the world. Playing piano since the age of 6, he went on to study music at Columbia University and the New England Conservatory. He continues to study with some of the greatest pedagogues in jazz and classical piano.

He performs as a jazz pianist, both solo and with ensembles. He also writes and records his own compositions, both Jewish and secular. He is also an accompanist at many synagogues including Rodeph Shalom in NYC and Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, NY.

Brian is also a very devoted Jewish music educator. He received his Jewish education at Orthodox Jewish Day School. He then received a degree in Talmud and Rabbinics from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He has taught Solomon Schechter of Essex County, The Frisch School, The Kushner Academy and many other Jewish institutions of all denominations. He was the choir director at the Yeshivah of Flatbush High School for over ten years. He currently teaches music at the Kinneret Day School in Riverdale, NY and She'arei Tikvah in Scarsdale, NY.



Jane Koch, Musician
and Choir Director

Jane Koch, Musician and Choir Director, has always had a love of music. She took piano and voice lessons growing up and has sung with many choirs and accompanied numerous Cantors and Vocalists. She has performed with a few Rock and Roll bands and sang in a trio with her beloved Cantor who helped to instill in her a love of Jewish music. Jane would play and sing for services when the Cantor was unavailable, played for youth services and also sang songs with the preschoolers. Jane started working for our congregation in 2003 as a music teacher and pianist for the choir. Over the years her job has evolved. She is a teacher, choir director and now is embracing this new

position co-leading services with Rabbi Ilana for select Shabbats and holidays. Jane and her husband, Eric raised their daughters, Elyssa and Jenna in Oakland where they have lived for over 30 years.