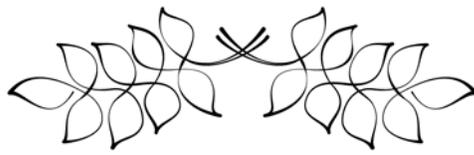


Volume 18 – Issue #2
Spring, 2013
1001 Central Avenue
Wilmette, Illinois 60091
tel: 847/ 251-2675
fax: 847/ 251-6002

www.sukkatshalom.org



CONGREGATION
SUKKAT SHALOM
Bulletin

Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Sam Gordon

I was deeply troubled by the recent Boston Marathon bombing. Like so many others, I found this terrorist act so senseless and horrifying. There can be no possible justification for the acts of these two brothers. What they did was evil. Yet, in the midst of the terror, there was true goodness.

I was moved by the selfless reaction of so many people who made their way into the crowd to try to help those who were wounded. Fellow spectators, first

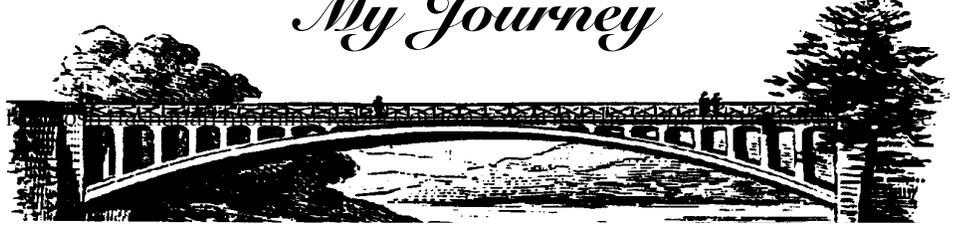
“There was little concern for personal safety even though no one knew if more bombs were yet to explode.”

responders, marathon runners all did whatever they could to save the wounded. There was little concern for personal safety even though no one knew if more bombs were yet to explode. It didn't matter to those people. They knew that others, even though strangers, were in danger or in pain, and they were going to selflessly put themselves forward to do whatever they could to help.

The Book of Leviticus, Chapter 19, states: “Thou shalt love your neighbor as yourself.” In the Talmud and in Gospels, the stories are told of Hillel and Jesus being asked to state the entire Torah in one succinct phrase, and they each answered by quoting this one sentence: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” From that phrase is derived Hillel's, “That which is hateful to you, do not do any other person.”

So, too, Jesus stated, “Do unto others as
please turn to page 2

My Journey



I approach the *bima* and stand between Rabbi Gordon and Cantor Kaufman. I look out upon the congregation. While this spot is only ten feet away from my regular seat in the choir, the congregation looks completely different from here. My heart starts beating faster.

My first thought is, “Where is Jeff Miller and why is he not here?” (Jeff is the individual who has sounded the shofar for our congregation for many years.) My next thought is, “What was I thinking when I promised Judy Buckman that I would sound the shofar this year?” I hear Rabbi Gordon say, “We will now say the blessing for the sounding of the shofar.”

Forty years before this Rosh Hashanah service, nearly to the day, I had another unlikely Jewish experience. When I was approaching my 13th birthday, it was not clear that I would become a Bar Mitzvah. During my early grade school years, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. I was fortunate to get help and to work through my challenges.

Since reading English was a challenge, my parents “wisely” removed me from Hebrew school. The logic behind this decision was that learning a language that reads in the opposite direction from English was too great a challenge for someone with my disability.

“Since reading English was a challenge, my parents ‘wisely’ removed me from Hebrew school.”

Thus, I never attended Hebrew or Sunday school as my brother and two sisters did.

A year before my 13th birthday, I expressed an interest in becoming a Bar Mitzvah. When my parents began to discuss this with leaders of our Conservative congregation in suburban Detroit, they ran into a challenge. The congregational leadership felt that, since I did not attend its Hebrew school, I could not become a Bar Mitzvah. My mother was persistent and, ultimately, successful in convincing the leadership that everyone need not follow the same path.

So in a manner very similar to how Congregation Sukkat Shalom prepares its students to become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, I was intensively tutored and coached to prepare for my day. This was not common in 1972 -- certainly not in the traditional congregation that my family attended. In September 1972, I became a Bar Mitzvah (*tifillin* and all) to the surprise of many, including myself.

please turn to page 2

From the Rabbi, cont'd

you would have them do unto you." That has come to be known as the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule appears in Islam as well. In the Kitab al-Kafi, a Bedouin came to the Prophet, grabbed the stirrup of his camel and said: "O Messenger of God! Teach me something that I can take to heaven." The Prophet said: "As you would have people do to you, do to them; and what you dislike to be done to you, don't do to them. Now let the stirrup go!"

Empathy and compassion are at the heart of the core teaching of Leviticus as well as the Gospel story and the tale from Islamic tradition. We are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves, because our neighbor is like ourselves. We place ourselves in the other's life and experience and understand how we are the same -- no matter age or race or religion or nationality.

"Hillel, Jesus and Mohammed each stated that the core lesson of faith is knowing the joy and pain of your neighbor."

We share a global community. A terrorist, or any sociopath, somehow ignores that sense of shared humanity. They cannot imagine themselves having the pain of others. To the sociopath, the other is an object, removed from the personal. In contrast, to the person of empathy and humanity, the other is the same as oneself.

Hillel, Jesus and Mohammed each stated that the core lesson of faith is knowing the joy and pain of your neighbor. There really is no other teaching as central as that one. It is the most important piece of wisdom to be handed on to our children and students.

Each one of us contains the breath of the Divine. Each of us is made in the image of God. Every life is precious. The taking of

Journey, cont'd

Back to the present. Rabbi Gordon begins the blessing for the sounding of the shofar. I recall the advice I received from many: "Don't make eye contact. Focus on your task at hand." As the Rabbi continues the blessing, I have time to catch my breath and recall my months of practice for this moment. But, as luck would have it, the blessing is over in a nanosecond and the Rabbi is calling for the first Tekiah.

"... the blessing is over in a nanosecond and the Rabbi is calling for the first Tekiah."

Thank goodness that the sound that is supposed to come from my shofar is in fact what I sounded. That is reassuring, and I begin to calm down.

It was an honor to sound the shofar for our congregation during this year's Rosh Hashanah. It is all the sweeter for overcoming the challenges that brought me to this special day -- one I will cherish and never forget.

one life destroys the world around us, but the saving of a single life is as if one saves the entire world.

Let us be grateful for the empathy and selflessness of all those who helped the fallen on that day in Boston. And may we always know that, in the long run, the true purpose of all our teachings is to make us care for others as we would hope they would care for us. As Hillel said: "That is all of Torah; all the rest is commentary."

The Diameter of the Bomb

by Yehuda Amichai

The diameter of the bomb was thirty centimeters and the diameter of its effective range—about seven meters, with four dead and eleven wounded. And around these, in a greater circle of pain and time, are scattered two hospitals and one cemetery. But the young woman who was buried in the city she came from, at a distance of more than a hundred kilometres, enlarges the circle considerably. And the lone man who weeps over her death at the distant shores of a country far across the sea includes the entire world in the circle. And I won't speak at all about the crying of orphans that reaches up to the throne of God and beyond, making a circle without end and without God.

Mazel Tov!

To **Rabbi Samuel N. Gordon** on his appointment by President Barack Obama to the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.



To high school students **Rebecca Peterson Hall** and **Madeline Stein** on receiving the North Shore Interfaith Leadership Award for their dedicated service to our community.

Sukkat Shalom – By the Numbers

Tzedakah collected at Family School
(thru May 5th): \$4,655
Organizations receiving tzedakah: 15
Average contribution: \$310.33

Revolutionary Thinking About the Future of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah

by Alissa Zuchman, Director of Family Education

Does the Bar/Bat Mitzvah have a future? If so, what should it be?

To help answer these questions, Congregation Sukkat Shalom has joined a new project of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ) called the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution. This revolution aims to empower congregations to look at ways to change what it means to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

I will be participating through June 2014 in the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution Active Learning Network, which brings together congregations throughout North America to explore the B'nai Mitzvah process. This network of congregations will learn from experts and each other in revolutionizing B'nai Mitzvah.

One of the main reasons for the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution is that many congregations have standardized the process of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and do not take into account the differences among 13 year-olds in terms of maturity and interest. Nor do they consider the differences among families.

Instead, the ceremony is centered on the individual child's performance of a ritual that he or she may not be able to fully understand or appreciate. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is counter-productive, driving children and families away from the community rather than strengthening their involvement.

We at Sukkat Shalom already take into account that each family is unique and thus each B'nai Mitzvah must fit what is right for each family. But we must always aspire to make that ceremony more meaningful and more spiritually fulfilling. Becoming a part of the B'nai Mitzvah Revolution network of congregations will enable us to pursue the following goals:

- Generate new ideas and images of meaningful celebrations that will tie B'nai Mitzvah and their families more closely to the Jewish tradition and the Jewish community.
- Create models of B'nai Mitzvah preparation that are more engaging for both the young people and their families.
- Promote more effective methods for the teaching of Hebrew and prayer.

- Create networks of 'critical friends' among synagogue leaders, sharing the findings of their research and providing network members with continual feedback.
- Share the models and resources created by this network with an ever-widening group of congregations.

Whether or not your child has become a B'nai Mitzvah, I invite members of Sukkat Shalom to share their ideas and concerns with me. We will continue to strive to make the Bar/Bat Mitzvah a most meaningful and fulfilling ceremony for each of our unique children and our wonderfully diverse families.

“We at Sukkat Shalom already take into account that each family is unique and thus each B'nai Mitzvah must fit what is right for each family.”



b'nai mitzvah revolution

Expanding Our Definition of Sacred Events

There are many ways in which we can become a more caring community, and the Hineinu (We Are Here) Committee is always looking for ideas.

At Family School on April 7th, congregants heard from Rabbi Richard Address, author of the book *Seekers of Meaning*. Rabbi Address discussed the possibility of making ordinary life transitions into sacred events by adding ceremonies and observances to recognize and enrich them.

Some of these new "celebrations" might include recognizing the end of a marriage after the death of a spouse; moving out of a family home that has seen a lifetime of events; or signing advance directives for health-care decisions.

Other ways to enhance community might include establishing a support group or a special service for a miscarriage; grieving together after a divorce or the end of a long-term relationship; or granting permission for a partner to move on after losing a loved one to dementia.

The Hineinu Committee encourages anyone who embraces these or other ideas to contact us, Rabbi Gordon or Judy Buckman. With open minds and open hearts, we can become a more responsive, more supportive and more inclusive faith community.

Getting Comfortable in Our New Home

It has been eight months since we began a new chapter in the life of Sukkat Shalom, taking up residence in our new spiritual home. And a busy time it has been: Bar and Bat Mitzvahs. The concluding service of Yom Kippur followed by a Break the Fast. Our own Sukkah, decorated by our children. A gala dedication weekend full of activities. The Wilmette Interfaith Thanksgiving service. The Cooking Club. Saturday morning Torah study. Shabbat Shira. Lunch and Learn. A baby naming. A wedding blessing.



Many congregants have mentioned that it feels like we have always been in our new building. That speaks to the skill of our leadership and staff, as well as the architects and contractors. The space is comfortable, classic and tasteful. It is the architectural reflection of our congregation.

We are continuing to make improvements and enhancements to the space. Recently, all of the remaining restrooms have been refurbished, thanks to a donor who came forward specifically to sponsor that project.

“We have found a welcoming home in which to learn, celebrate, grow and mourn.”

The living room area in the entry foyer has proved to be a good area for holding small committee meetings, board meetings and adult study. While meetings were not the original intent of that space, it has turned out to be an inviting and comfortable place to gather.

Message from the President: End of (My) Days

The final month of my four years serving as President of Congregation Sukkat Shalom is upon me. I am leaving this position with gratitude to the board members, past presidents and, of course, all of the superb professional staff that have served our congregation so well over this eventful time.

Three milestones emerge from our congregational history since the summer of 2009. First, we performed a congregational engagement survey and feedback process to determine our congregants' sense of, and feelings about, Sukkat Shalom. The Board has used the findings of this important survey as a touchstone when we have deliberated on the business of the congregation.

Second, the congregation experienced turnover in the roles of Cantor, Director of Family Education and Program Coordinator without a loss of continuity. Each of these staff provided richness to the tapestry we weave together that we would not have enjoyed without their diverse talents and perspectives.

Despite these changes in important staff positions, the programming of the congregation has continued in the same man-

Having Rabbi Gordon's and Judy's offices so close to the front entrance has been wonderful for congregants as well as the occupants. Judy says, "Perhaps what I love best about the building is being in my office and just having congregants come in and say hi or sit down and visit. I love that part...it feels like my home!"

Alissa adds, "Having my office and supplies right where I teach is nice. My favorite place besides the sanctuary is the group of couches in the foyer. It is such a great, inviting place to relax with members of the Sukkat Shalom family."

We have been welcomed to the neighborhood with several meaningful and generous gifts from our spiritual neighbors. The Presbyterian Church of Wilmette has purchased an espalier tree that will be planted on the north side of the building. It will be trained to grow in the shape of a menorah.

The Church of Latter Day Saints, where we hold our High Holy Day services, has purchased two large, beautiful urns filled with plants to be placed outside the main entrance to the building. We appreciate the generosity and thoughtfulness of our friends.

"We have been in our new building for a little more than half a year, but already this building has become part of the fabric and life of our community and congregational family," says Rabbi Gordon. "We have found a welcoming home in which to learn, celebrate, grow and mourn. It truly has become our Shelter of Peace -- Sukkat Shalom."

by Jesse Peterson Hall

ner that we have come to expect due primarily to the constant presence, energy and dedication of Rabbi Gordon and Executive Director Judy Buckman.

Third, through the hard work of many elements of the congregational family, we founded a congregational home and created a dynamic, spiritual, sacred space.

I am proud of the new Board, which includes many veteran members and will be led by President-Elect Fred Wilson. The congregation will benefit greatly from Fred's calm and thoughtful demeanor. Sukkat Shalom will continue to thrive with so many dedicated members willing to devote their talents and time in service to our congregation. Truly, the best is yet to come.

Finally, thank you to my wife Liz and daughter Rebecca for giving me the time and understanding that allowed me to undertake this role.

Lech L'cha!

Sukkat Shalom to Host First Homeless Family in July

I don't think I had ever seen ping-pong played like Michael was playing it. It may have been the first time he ever played the game.

The young boy was jumping all over the social hall at First Presbyterian Church of Wilmette, where I was playing ping-pong with him and his fellow guests in the Family Promise program. He hit the ball so hard that it went bouncing across the room; he immediately ran after it and tried to hit it back onto the table. The ball bounced off the table and headed toward a far corner of the hall. Undeterred, Michael continued at this frenetic pace for about 15 minutes until everybody in the room was laughing so hard that they could not stand, much less play.

At times like this I realize that we all share the same sense of what's funny, the same desire to fit in, the same need for family and friends and a roof over our heads. Unfortunately, some of us don't have a roof over our heads -- at least not one that we can call our own.

That is what the Family Promise program is designed to address. Family Promise and its sponsor, the Interfaith Hospitality Network, bring together the faith community to help families regain their housing, independence and dignity. The program is a partnership of congregations within a community helping families who are facing homelessness. It offers an opportunity for volunteers of all faiths to reduce homelessness and transform lives.

At Sukkat Shalom, we have partnered with First Presbyterian Church for three years and joined volunteers from their congregation to host homeless families in their building about once every quarter. Now, for the first time, Sukkat Shalom will host a homeless family in our own building from July 14-21, assisted by volunteers from First Presbyterian.

The guests have dinner, stay overnight and have breakfast. Then they go to a day center in Evanston, or to work or school. They spend seven nights at each congregation and then move on to the next one. There are 28 congregations in Family Promise North Shore.

Nationally, nearly 80 percent of the participating families graduate to long-term housing. In 2011, Family Promise affiliates served nearly 50,000 children and adults and involved more than 150,000 volunteers from 5,500 congregations.

For Sukkat Shalom's initial hosting opportunity in July, we need volunteers (including kids of any age accompanied by an

adult) to make dinner, stay overnight (adults only) and help move beds in and out of our building. One member from each volunteer family will require training for an hour or so. We will soon send information on the training schedule. There will be several opportunities for training before our hosting dates.

Participating in this program could make for an excellent Bar or Bat Mitzvah project. It's a unique opportunity to perform Tikkun Olam and social justice as a family. It's also a wonderful celebration of our new sacred space.

Please contact the temple office with any questions or if you are interested in participating. I hope you'll consider signing up.

*“Now, for the first time,
Sukkat Shalom will host a
homeless family in our own
building from July 14-21.”*

Cantor's Corner: To Everything There is a Season

by Cantor Jason Kaufman

In the book of Ecclesiastes we read that there is a time for everything under the sun. "There is a time to weep and a time to laugh – a time to mourn and a time to dance."

I have had the privilege to serve as Cantor of Sukkat Shalom for two years. The time has come, however, for me to execute one of life's more difficult necessities – saying good-bye. One of the positive aspects of saying goodbye, however, is the opportunity to open one's heart and allow a greater amount of gratitude into one's being. I can certainly attest to that, as I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude for those who have joined me on this part of my life's journey.

First and foremost, I am grateful to Rabbi Sam Gordon and the entire staff and Board of Directors for inviting me and welcoming me into this community. I am grateful for the educators and teachers who taught me as, together, we taught our students our tradition and how to live with a sense of awe and appreciation for the world.

I am grateful for my Bat and Bar Mitzvah students -- every single one of them. They were more than my students; they were my teachers. Wherever we may find ourselves in the world, I will always care about you.

To everyone with whom I had the opportunity to create music during the past two years, I thank you. Earlier this year, a collection of choir members came together at a healing service where we sang one of my favorite melodies -- "Those Who Sow," by my mentor and friend of blessed memory, Debbie Friedman. It's a simple, repetitive melody sung in unison. Its simplicity forced us to look inward and realize that music of the synagogue is not merely a performative art form, but a spiritual vehicle to communicate with holiness.

I am also grateful for everyone who has been a part of my journey to "live my healthiest life." To everyone with whom I sat in deep conversation or walked along the lakefront path: Thank you for sharing so honestly with me.

Most of all, to everyone who helped me prepare for last year's Chicago Marathon – from those who encouraged me to sign up in the first place to those who trained with me, oftentimes at 5:30 on weekday mornings, to those amazing souls who woke up at 4 a.m. to drive me to the starting line in style -- the words "thank you" are so inadequate.

I must say a special thank you to Miles Paris, who actually ran with me from Mile 20 to the finish line. Mile 20 is a sanctuary of sorts, and I was fortunate to share it with Miles.

All of you have inspired me to live my best life and, more important, to help inspire others to live theirs. I now consider this to be one of the most important goals of my cantorate -- and I realize this only because of Sukkat Shalom.

Now that I've attempted to say goodbye, let me share the unspoken truth: No one ever truly says goodbye to a synagogue family. How could we? Our lives are inextricably linked. Though we wish each other well on our respective journeys, our shared memories will always bind us together.

For that, I am not just grateful. I am blessed.

Please come to a special Shabbat service and Oneg on Friday, June 14th to honor Cantor Kaufman and wish him well on his journey.



CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM

CONGREGATION SUKKAT SHALOM
1001 CENTRAL AVENUE
WILMETTE, ILLINOIS 60091
847/ 251-2675
www.sukkatshalom.org

Rabbi Samuel Gordon
Cantor Jason Kaufman
Director of
Family Education Alissa Zuchman
Executive Director Judy Buckman
President Fred Wilson
Vice President Jill Schoeneman-Parker
Treasurer Joel Fliegel
Secretary Cary Nathenson

Beth Gombert-Hirsch
Clive Hohberger
Ken Kraus
Pamela Kraus
Ken Obel
Miles Paris
Anne Ryan
Marilyn Schonthal
Debra Shore

Jesse Peterson Hall, Ex-Officio President
Liz Sciortino, Ex-Officio President
Jane Rothschild, Ex-Officio President
Andrew Werth, Ex-Officio, President
Matt Baker, Ex-Officio, President
Bulletin Editor John Kupper
Layout and Design Deborah Harris