

Humanorah

the newsletter of the Society for Humanistic Judaism



Summer/Autumn 2014

Vol. 36 No. 1

CONCLAVE 2014 WAS AMAZING; BE SURE YOUR TEENS & COLLEGE STUDENTS DON'T MISS 2015 IN MICHIGAN



Conclave is a wonderful time for teens to come together from all over country and Canada, and share their experiences as Humanistic Jewish teens. It is a safe space to talk about challenges they face growing up and creating their own journeys and narratives in their lives, and creates bonds that are long-lasting. In March 2014,

62 teens and college students from SHJ communities around North America did just that as they participated in Conclave 2014 in Boston, MA. Participants represented 14 congregations, including 4 who were sending participants for the first time.

In March, **Conclave 2015** will be back at one of our favorite locations – the Butzel Conference Center in suburban Detroit. The Conclave will take place **March 20-22, 2015**. For years, attendees have benefited from the closeknit community this beautiful wooded setting provides. HuJews from across the country and Canada will come together to celebrate and learn from one another.

The theme of the 2015 Conclave will be **Identities** as we explore together the many identities that we assume and that are assigned to us. What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to

be Jewish? What does it mean to be a humanist? How do we define ourselves? And how do others define us? These questions and others will be examined in both formal workshops and informal discussions as well as through the experiences we will share.

We are excited to introduce our new Conclave Coordinator, **Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld**, who leads Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community in Deerfield, IL. She was ordained by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism in 2009. Rabbi Jodi is committed to leading by ethical and moral example, listening to the voice of the community and displaying compassion and sensitivity to the community's needs. As an effective communicator, Rabbi Jodi has a wonderful capacity for instilling a deep knowledge of Judaism, making the knowledge relevant for the community, and fostering a sense of togetherness through communal learning and celebration. She was happy to be a rabbi in residence at Conclave 2013.

She looks forward to Conclave 2015. Throughout the weekend we will have the opportunity to do outdoor activities as well as service activities in one of the local communities. Watch for details about registration, fees, and scholarships. If you have questions, please contact Rabbi Jodi directly at rabbijodi@gmail.com, or SHJ at info@shj.org.



SHANA TOVA UMETUKA FROM THE SHJ

DANGEROUS DECISION FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE

SHJ AFFILIATES

ARIZONA
SECULAR HUMANIST JEWISH Circle
OR ADAM, CHJ

CALIFORNIA
ADAT CHAVERIM, VALLEY CHJ
KAHAL AM, SAN DIEGO
KOL HADASH, CHJ
ORANGE COUNTY CSJH
PACIFIC COMMUNITY OF CULTURAL JEWS

COLORADO
BETH AMI, COLORADO CHJ

CONNECTICUT
CHJ, FAIRFIELD COUNTY

D.C.
MACHAR, CSJH

FLORIDA
CHJ, SARASOTA
CONGREGATION BETH ADAM
HUMANISTIC JEWISH HAVURAH of SW FL

ILLINOIS
BETH CHAVERIM, HJC
KOL HADASH HUMANISTIC CONGREGATION

MARYLAND
BALTIMORE JEWISH CULTURAL CHAVURAH

MASSACHUSETTS
KAHAL B'RAIRA, BOSTON CHJ

MICHIGAN
THE BIRMINGHAM TEMPLE

MINNESOTA
OR EMET, CHJ of MINNESOTA

NEW JERSEY
KAHAL CHAVERIM, NJ CHJ

NEW YORK
BETH HASKALAH, ROCHESTER SHJ
KOL HAVERIM, FINGER LAKES CHJ
MID-HUDSON HAVURA
THE CITY CONGREGATION
WESTCHESTER CHJ

NORTH CAROLINA
KOL HASKALAH

OHIO
HUMANIST JEWISH CHAVURAH, COLUMBUS

OREGON
KOL SHALOM, CHJ

WASHINGTON
SECULAR JEWISH Circle of Puget Sound

CANADA
ORAYNU, TORONTO, ON

On June 30, the Supreme Court dealt an unbelievable blow to women's healthcare and religious freedom. In a 5-4 decision, the High Court ruled that privately-held, for-profit corporations have religious rights, rights that permit them to refuse to provide some contraceptive insurance coverage to employees. "That corporations could be deemed to have religious freedom redefines the guarantees of the First Amendment, depriving employees, most specifically women, of the right to pursue their individual religious beliefs," said Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) Executive Director Bonnie Cousens. The Court's failure to protect women's access to healthcare as guaranteed by the Affordable Care Act, especially when coupled with its decision disallowing some buffer zones for protesters at abortion clinics and its stay in the enforcement of the accommodation for religious non-profits, is a serious setback for women's rights."

As Humanistic Jews, we recognize that all people have the fundamental right to determine the course of their own lives. Contraceptive choice is only one of the many components of this personal freedom. A woman's ability to access contraception shouldn't depend on where she works or on the beliefs of her boss.

This ruling has the potential to harm women and all those who would benefit from employer-paid healthcare for contraception. In effect, it allows for-profit companies to engage in the exercise of religion and impose their owner's religious beliefs on employees who do not share those beliefs, thereby limiting an employee's right to make personal healthcare decisions with which their employer disagrees. Ultimately, the ruling could be extended to other corporations, including publicly-held corporations, or other medical or life decisions, including the decision to use other forms of contraception, to have an abortion, to use in-vitro fertilization, to marry a person of the same sex, to have a child as a single woman, to have a blood transfusion or be vaccinated, or to donate to stem-cell research.

The SHJ was party to the amicus brief filed by the Anti-Defamation League and a broad spectrum of religious organizations in support of the government in these cases. In addition, the SHJ joined more than 40 fellow member organizations of the Coalition for Liberty & Justice in a statement supporting real religious liberty for all.

Autumn 2014

Humanorah

Vol. 36 No. 1

Humanorah is a publication of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a non-profit organization that mobilizes people to celebrate Jewish identity and culture consistent with a humanistic philosophy of life.

Members of the Society for Humanistic Judaism receive *Humanorah* as a benefit of membership. Read *Humanorah* online at www.shj.org. A print edition is available upon request; contact info@shj.org. At-large membership in the Society for Humanistic Judaism is \$95 per year. Membership is tax deductible as provided by law.

President: Larry Lawrence

Executive Director: Bonnie Cousens

Rabbi: Miriam Jerris

Address all inquiries about *Humanorah* to the Society for Humanistic Judaism, 28611 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, MI, 48334, 248/478-7610, Fax: 248/478-3159, info@shj.org.

Notes From Around the Globe



A NEW YEAR, A NEW WEBSITE

With a new year beginning, we're very excited to announce the launch of our new website – you'll find us at the same address: www.shj.org. With a fresh, modern look and even more content about the philosophy and practices of Humanistic Judaism, the new site provides an inviting, informative portal into the Society for Humanistic Judaism and the Humanistic Jewish movement as a whole. To long-standing members and prospects, to the curious and the seekers of a different way to connect to their Jewish identity, the new website offers a treasure trove of information about Humanistic Judaism to involve and inform them.

Our Home page is ever-changing. You will find a slide show with photos that link to some of the most frequently visited pages. The Recent News box links to the most up-to-date news about the Society and issues of importance to us as Humanistic Jews. A direct feed from the SHJ Facebook page keeps viewers informed about happenings in SHJ and our communities and provides links to news, articles, and events of interest.

Prominently featured on our Home page is a wonderful new video, made possible by a generous gift from a member, of a young couple telling their story of how they found Humanistic Judaism and what it means to them. The video provides a link to a page featuring the stories of other families for whom Humanistic Judaism makes a difference. Have you sent us your story?

And, of course, you will find the ubiquitous buttons to join and donate, as well as links to SHJ's Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube pages on every page. Also prominent is a Contact Us button and a link for newbies to sign up for our e-newsletter *On the Move*. Everyone interested in Humanistic Judaism is invited to subscribe and check out how we live our Humanistic Jewish values.

Across the navigation bar, viewers can explore sections about Humanistic Judaism, SHJ, communities, Humanistic Jewish

life, our youth programs, and a newly designed shopping experience. Drop-down menus provide links to pages that explain the Humanistic Jewish philosophy; that talk about what the SHJ does; that link to the *Humanorah* and press releases; that list SHJ communities; that explore how we live as Humanistic Jews and how we celebrate Jewish holidays (don't miss the awesome holiday slide show at the bottom of the page) and life cycles; and that describe our HuJews youth program and our philosophy of youth education with links to community Sunday school programs. You can ask questions about the philosophy and practice of Humanistic Judaism, give a gift subscription to our journal *Humanistic Judaism*, send a tribute, or celebrate a special occasion in the lives of your children or grandchildren by making them life members of SHJ.

You'll find several pages on the site that enable viewers to contact SHJ communities via e-mail or through links to communities' websites. Upcoming SHJ and movement events are listed on the calendar. Included are Institute adult education seminars hosted by SHJ communities.

Our redesigned, easy-to-navigate store features our most popular publications, DVDs, CDs, and gifts, with a secure shopping cart check-out system. You'll find store sections with books to help explain Humanistic Judaism, resources for celebrating Jewish holidays and life cycles, the collected works of Rabbi Sherwin Wine, and resources for youth and adult education. Also featured are recordings produced by several SHJ communities, and DVDs of the best of Rabbi Wine's lectures on Humanistic Judaism. And you now have the convenience and confidence afforded by PayPal to make your purchase.

The website is your way to stay connected to everything happening within the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Check it out today and come back frequently – www.shj.org.

MACHAR LEARNS ABOUT & EXPERIENCES SEROTONIN-BOOSTING POWER OF COMMUNITY



In January 2014, Machar hosted Dr. Andy Thomson, a psychiatrist in Charlottesville VA and Trustee of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. Thomson, the author of *Why We Believe in God(s): A Concise Guide to the Science of Faith*, presented important research from the National Institutes of Health advancing a comprehensive psychological science of religious belief.

Thomson's talk focused on the human brain functions tapped by religious belief and actions. "With no knowledge of neurochemistry, somehow our ancestors stum-

bled upon combinations of activities that could stimulate and boost" our brains' serotonin neurons in ways that enhance our self-esteem." Rituals, as well as group singing and dancing, are aspects of all the oldest existing religions of the world. He reinforced for us that, while we focus on reasoning to make our life choices, we also satisfy our human needs with our sense of community, creating our own rituals, and singing and dancing together! See a 2009 version of Thomson's talk on YouTube at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_53LxfMP6E

Proving Thomson's research right, we had a serotonin-boosting weekend in February with Rabbi Nehama Benmosche, who was subsequently chosen as Machar's new rabbi. Members gathered for a Saturday evening "Challa Havdala Potluck," featuring lessons in challa-making, children's crafts, and a beautiful service. Sunday morning, Rabbi Benmosche gave a fascinating talk, drawing connections between the story of Purim and the ideas of Tibetan Buddhist nun Pema Chodron, and co-led a rousing round of Purim and civil rights songs.

Marlene Cohen and Kelly Hand, Washington, D.C.

BALTIMORE JEWISH CULTURAL CHAVURAH DISCUSSES BDS

We generally avoid controversial issues and over the course of fifteen years our programs on Israel have been infrequent. We have periodically had as speakers a Jewish-American professor and a Palestinian activist, both supporters of a two-state solution, and we have contributed tzedakah funds to Americans for Peace Now and Beyond Words.

The subject of BDS - applying boycott, divestment, and/or sanctions strategies to Israeli settlements, Israeli institutions, or companies involved in the occupied territories, in support of the Palestinian cause - has received much attention in our local press (general and Jewish) over the past couple of months. Member David Korn suggested that we sponsor a debate on the issue. Our planning committee liked the idea and Co-President Fred Pincus, a retired sociology professor, organized it. He recruited two speakers: the pro-BDS speaker from Jewish Voice for Peace, the con-BDS speaker from J Street. We billed the event as "Conflicting Views on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions in Israel: A Moderated Discussion" rather than a debate.

Though our publicity was no more extensive than usual - notices to our email list, flyers in libraries, a calendar listing on the Jewish weekly's web site - and our area has had a lot of snowfall and closings recently, we attracted 65 people, more than any previous event other than one Rosh Hashana. The expected vehement right-wing opposition did not materialize, but a wide range of viewpoints emerged nevertheless during the Q&A and overall the proceedings were quite civil.

Bob Jacobson, co-president



WHY CHJ, SARASOTA, BELONGS TO SHJ

I am sometimes asked: “Why should a congregation pay its assessment? What dollar value does a congregation get from the Society for Humanistic Judaism?” That’s when I do my best imitation of President Kennedy and reply: “Ask not what SHJ can do for you; ask what you can do for SHJ.” And that is a serious, if somewhat theatrical, answer.

If there were no central body for the Humanistic Jewish movement, we would be trying to create one. If we knew that there were about 30 Humanistic Jewish congregations and communities scattered about the U.S. and Canada that had no formal relationship to each other, our first thought would be:

“Shouldn’t we band together on a permanent basis for mutual support, and for sharing of Shabbat and High Holiday services, Sunday school curricula, and other resources? Shouldn’t we band together on a permanent basis in opposition to the Christian fundamentalists who want to impose their religious ideology on the rest of us?”

We would want to unite all the Humanistic Jewish congregations and communities because Jews are a small minority, and we Humanists are a small minority even among Jews, so we really should stick together. In other words, we would want to form some sort of mutual benefit society. Well, that’s what we already have!

That’s exactly why the SHJ got started in the 1960s. There were three original unrelated congregations: one in suburban Detroit, founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine; one in suburban Chicago, founded by Rabbi Dan Friedman; and one in Connecticut, founded by Jeanne and John Franklin; and when they discovered each other they got together to form the Society for Humanistic Judaism as a national umbrella group.

After that, the SHJ grew to connect many congregations and communities all over the U.S. and Canada. As a re-

sult, people can now move to a different city and know that they can find a Humanistic Jewish congregation there. In fact Ellie and I specifically chose our winter home just because we knew about the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism in Sarasota!

And how did CHJ Sarasota get formed in the first place? Because my wife Ellie introduced Joan Fox, whom she knew from the Chicago congregation, to Ellie’s cousin’s friend Betty Pelletz, who met with SHJ Executive Director Bonnie Cousens, and Bonnie put Betty in touch with Ettie Handelman from Detroit’s Birmingham Temple, and the rest is history. Good things happen when people network.

And that’s not all. As CHJ began to function SHJ provided resources to support the fledgling community and sent Rabbi Wine to visit again and again and again.

Over the years the SHJ has grown beyond the original three congregations. It has an office and pays rent. It has an Executive Director plus several part-time employees, including a rabbi who serves all the SHJ congregations, communities, and *havurot* (most of which do not have their own rabbi). It publishes a journal and multiple e-newsletters. It continues to provide programs, resources, and support for all the Humanistic Jewish congregations and communities in North America.

Of course there is a cost for all this. So each congregation pays a share of that cost, not only for what they get in return, but in order to give back; i.e., in order to support the entire Humanistic Jewish community in North America, to support the ethical voice of humanism in government, and to sustain the idea of Humanistic Jewish solidarity. There is no way to put a dollar amount on the value of that idea. We are fortunate to have an organization such as SHJ in which to make that investment.

Lou Altman, SHJ past president & member of CHJ, Sarasota & Kol Hadash, IL

Happy Anniversary

Congregation Beth Adam, FL, on your 20th & Kahal Chaverim, NJ, on your 15th

Mazel Tov!

SJC CELEBRATES MAURICE SENDAK

“Come to Where the Wild Things Are” was the call to members and friends of the Secular Jewish Circle of Puget Sound for the February Shabbat. Celebrating the life, art, and wisdom of 2013-2014 SHJ Humanistic Jewish Role Model Maurice Sendak provided ample material for young and old alike. We started the evening’s program with a dramatic presentation of “Where the Wild Things Are,” perhaps the most famous of Sendak’s many works. As SJC member Duane Jonlin read, seven-year old Jonah played the young Max, undaunted by the growls and grim faces of the SJC tweens and teens playing the Wild Things. Audience members delighted in the antics of our actors and the juicy words of Sendak, a slide show of Sendak’s paintings in the background.

After the performance, we listened to an endearing clip of Maurice Sendak being interviewed by Terry Gross on Fresh Air. SJC member and Shalom Sunday teacher Ro Gluck then read an essay he had written contemplating the legacy of Maurice Sendak. We wrapped up the evening with a discussion of our impressions and memories of Sendak. Audience members recalled how we have been moved by the gentle, immensely artistic Sendak. We are proud to learn of his humanistic Jewish worldview.

SJC has found the annual SHJ Humanistic Jewish Role Model to provide a wonderful opportunity to learn about the diversity, talents, and contributions of famous humanistic Jews.

*Erica Jonlin,
Secular Jewish Circle
of Puget Sound, WA*

WESTCHESTER CHJ DELVES INTO JEWISH HISTORY

We began the Jewish History Buffs about 10 years ago with 3 eager participants, all history buffs, thus our name. With a somewhat amorphous format, we met doggedly for several years in each others’ homes, very much a case of the blind leading the blind. Beginning with texts such as Dimont’s *Jews, God and History*, we dabbled in archeology and the Kabbala, expanding into films and novels. We have taken advantage of members’ backgrounds to enrich our programs. One member, a Presbyterian with a possible Jewish great-grandfather in her background, opened up the mysteries of Catholicism and the Reformation to us. Another, who escaped from Prague with her family just before World War II, gave us a wonderful picture of Jewish life in Czechoslovakia and related the story of their escape, an unimaginable feat. Among our great successes were *The Hare With the Amber Eyes*, a window into the lives of wealthy Jews in 19th century Odessa, Paris, and Vienna, and *The Pity of It All*, a history of the Jews in Germany. Even the tenets of Islam became part of our “extra-curricular” topics.

Club membership has expanded to include two-thirds of our congregation, while our knowledge of history has grown thru this successful program.

Gloria Weil, WCHJ newsletter editor

SHJ URGES ACCEPTANCE OF J STREET BY PRESIDENTS’ CONFERENCE

When the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations rejected J Street’s bid for membership in the Conference. In a statement adopted on May 4, 2014, the SHJ called upon the Conference “to revise its procedures for approving new members to ensure that they promote pluralism” and urged them to reconsider the application of J Street. “The strength of the Jewish community lies in its pluralistic nature,” said Bonnie Cousens, SHJ Executive Director. “Although not taking a position on J Street’s policies and activities, the Society recognizes that J Street represents a vibrant, active component of the Jewish community. To exclude so large a portion of the community, diminishes the Conference’s ability to represent the full American Jewish community on issues relating to Israel.”

MACHAR MEMBER MAKES OUTREACH PROGRAM POSSIBLE

Communities might want to follow the example of a dedicated member of Machar in Washington, DC. This member enabled Machar to sponsor recent broadcasts of *Interfaith Voices*, “the nation’s leading religion news magazine on public radio,” heard on more

than 74 public radio stations across the U.S. and in Canada. The broadcast of September 19 covered the sounding of the shofar and other topics such as the Dalai Lama vs. China. At the end of the broadcast, host Maureen Fiedler, said: “Interfaith Voices is independent

and listener-supported, and is also supported by Machar, a Jewish congregation serving secular Jews, humanists, and interfaith families in the DC area – offering Jewish cultural school and High Holiday services. More information at Machar.org.”

KOL SHALOM COMMUNITY ENJOYS YIDDISH CLUB

We know that language directly influences our culture, how we think, and what we believe. For cultural Jews, Yiddish is important as a significant connection to a strong Jewish communal life. Yiddish even served as an important inspiration for Humanistic Judaism's founder Sherwin Wine. Sherwin saw the secular Yiddishists (keepers of the Yiddish culture and language) as forerunners of the movement.

Therefore we were very sad when our beloved Yiddish Lehrer (teacher) Selma Zack retired. However, it's our fargenign (pleasure) to announce that Jack "Yankl" Falk is our new Lehrer. Jack "Yankl" Falk is a klezmer musician, traveling cantor, and longtime host of the Sunday morning Yiddish Hour on KBOO-FM, a local radios station.



For the past 15 years, Kol Shalom Community for Humanistic Judaism has been doing its part to keep Yiddish alive. Offering the only Yiddish class in the city, our Yiddish language club meets once a month to learn, sing, share experiences, and even enjoy Yiddish jokes. Our class not only focuses on building new language skills, structure, and vocabulary, but also serves as a cultural event in its own right. Our *Lehrer* (teacher) also gets together with us during the month for coffee or lunch to practice and "schmooze."

Kol Shalom's Yiddish Club is open to anyone who has an interest in learning Yiddish and celebrating its unique culture. Both members and non-members are welcome to participate. We are very happy to announce that our Yiddish Club recently received a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

*Mary Raskin,
SHJ Board Designee, OR*

NEW OUTREACH EFFORTS AT SECULAR JEWISH CIRCLE

In the last few months, SJC has stepped up marketing and outreach efforts to reverse a trend of decreasing membership. The marketing committee is identifying target demographics and developing strategies, mostly revolving around the internet and social media, to reach these audiences.

As a small business owner, I'm using my marketing skills for SJC in the following areas: Improving our website to include essays explaining secular spirituality, values, and beliefs, and adding more video content to the site including a series of interviews with members to highlight some of our different programs. Also, to strengthen our social media connections with other affiliated Jewish or Secular Humanist organizations I have initiated an SJC Twitter feed, Facebook page, and YouTube channel.

On our new website Blog page, you'll find a video presentation (with accompanying document) by Judi Gladstone on "the 6 points of connection to Judaism that are an entry point for all Jews, religious or secular." Our next video in the series will focus

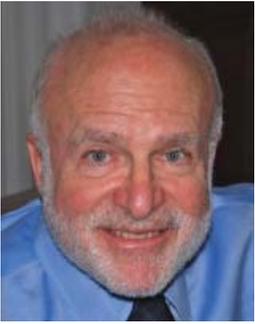
on Mitch Gitelman, a parent and former SJC B'nai Mitzvah teacher, discussing our B'nai Mitzvah program. We're also planning an interview with three SJC teens who will talk about their experiences at the 2014 HuJews Conclave. I will continue to create new videos interviewing interesting Jewish Secular Humanists about every two to three months.

Beyond the internet, I am actively organizing and promoting activities for current or prospective members who have children too young for Sunday School. Last June, I began "Tot Shabbat" events at a local park where the kids had a chance to meet for free play then a secular Shabbat ritual, emphasizing storytelling and singing. We drew back some former members at these events and made some new friends. At our Purim party, I included a children's carnival and made a special effort to phone all families (current and prospective) to invite them. About half of those attending the Purim party were new people!

I invite you to check out our website, www.SecularJewishCircle.org, and our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/SecularJewishCircle, which will lead you to our Youtube Channel.

Malya Muth, Secular Jewish Circle of Puget Sound, WA

FROM SHJ PRESIDENT LARRY LAWRENCE HUMANISTIC JUDAISM AT 50



Fifty years ago, I was four years past my Bar Mitzvah, and I had already distanced myself from the practices and affiliations of my family and our Brooklyn Jewish neighborhood. Though I was fascinated (as I still am) with the majesty and mysteries of biblical stories and the cadences of Hebrew, I had strong reservations about the supernatural aspects of our prayers and superstitions. At the time, however, I did not have the courage to say of traditional Judaism, “This isn’t for me.”

So Judaism wasn’t part of my life during the early 1960s. Yet simultaneously, in a Detroit suburb, Rabbi Sherwin Wine and several families founded the Birmingham Temple, carving out a niche for Jews who define themselves by the clarity of their beliefs and have the strength and honesty to be different in important ways, while remaining vibrantly Jewish. From these first steps came what we now call the Humanistic Jewish movement, with 30 communities, ranging in size from small *havurot* to communities of several hundred families, and numerous individual members who don’t live near communities.

While in college, I became interested in Israel and in Jewish history. By the mid 1990s, I had a nine-year old daughter, and I wanted to expose her to some form of Judaism. By good luck, I encountered Machar (originally created by Birmingham Temple members who had moved to Washington, D.C.). I was delighted to see that it had something for both of us. It gave her a secular Jewish education and, for me, an opportunity to be Jewish without hypocrisy. My initial involvement in Machar’s board, and then in SHJ, was my way of giving something back to the community I had rejoined.

Now, I often think of the next generation. Can we imagine what the Humanistic Jewish movement will look

like in, say, 2040? Will young people step up to create, teach, and lead as older generations step aside? Will our communities grow larger, will we nurture additional congregations, and will more families participate in Jewish culture, holidays, and traditions? Will our values become more prominent and influential among unaffiliated Jews in an increasingly secularized society?

We are confident that we’ll succeed. But we have some daunting tasks ahead of us, including:

- Dealing with demographic challenges as young secular individuals decreasingly join organized religious groups, even those whose values match their own;
- Restoring SHJ to fiscal stability by reversing the decline in contributions we have experienced since the Great Recession; and
- Strengthening vibrant, person-to-person connections among our members, their communities, and other communities in the movement.

Many of our congregations and communities are already working toward these goals, as are the SHJ Board of Directors, Executive Director Bonnie Cousens and Rabbi Miriam Jerris. Success at the outset of the movement’s next fifty years depends on widespread collaboration and energy, including the use of social media to contact, recruit, and retain new members, both young and old, and to increase the visibility of Humanistic Judaism in the population at large. We’re working to find effective ways to do this.

My goals as SHJ’s new president are to help the board, staff, and communities develop new ideas and methods to increase our prominence, to connect with potential new members, to nourish new communities, and to deepen our experience of Humanistic Judaism. We’re justly proud of its first fifty years of accomplishment. Here’s to making it a hundred!

Follow us on  **twitter**

<https://twitter.com/#!/humanisticjews>

Like us on  **Facebook**

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Society-for-Humanistic-Judaism/78679832303?ref=ts>

A NEW APPROACH TO A CULTURAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM

When I was hired as the cultural school director of Adat Chaverim in Los Angeles, their school had been meeting on Sundays at two different campuses. There was no predictability in the schedule: each time families arrived at a site, they were either relieved to find other families there, or dismayed to learn that they showed up at the wrong place. Additionally, the rent was steadily rising at both locations, and our small but strong congregation was struggling to keep up.



social action events, museum trips, and family Havdala services. I re-organized the curriculum around Jewish/Universal values, so each out-of-the-classroom activity was preceded by relevant lessons. For example, we spent a session on “Zikaron: Honoring Our Ancestors” and the

next week visited a museum exhibit on “Jews in the Los Angeles Mosaic.” We learned about “Tikkun Olam: Repairing the World” and then planted trees with the Tree People. And so on.

We faced the same obstacles this past year. Our primary campus, the American Jewish University, gave us a random list of days we couldn’t meet there. Rather than again hopping sporadically between the University and another site, we decided to fill the unavailable days with

The new curriculum has been very successful for us. Our congregation is saving money and families are raving about the diverse programming. Most important, we are fulfilling our goal of living our values.

Cantor Jonathan L. Friedmann, Adat Chaverim, CA

KOL HADASH, ILLINOIS, COMES HOME!

After nearly thirteen years of being the wandering Jews, Kol Hadash came home. In January, Kol Hadash began sharing space with the North Shore Unitarian Church in Deerfield, Illinois. While Sunday School continues at Deerfield High School and the offices remain in Lincolnshire, all services, including High Holiday and B’nai Mitzvah services and most other programming are now held in one place.

The location is especially fitting. The North Shore Unitarian Church was used by another Humanistic Jewish Congregation before it found a home fifty years ago! Kol Hadash has been holding B’nai Mitzvah services at the church since 2001.



Kol Hadash also has a new digital home. After exhaustive work, research, and collaboration, Kol Hadash unveiled a new home on the Internet! The new website allows members to login and access special members-only features. Members will be able to update their information, pay dues, fees, and sign up for special events through the new website. The website also provides an easy and convenient way for newcomers to find out about all aspects of Kol Hadash.

When people asked, “where are you?” Kol Hadash congregants used to struggle. Now the answer is clear, simple, and easy to find: 2100 Half Day Road and kolhadash.com!

David Hirsch

CONGRATULATIONS!

TO THE PRESIDENTS & LEADERS OF OUR AFFILIATED COMMUNITIES:

- Arizona* **Jeffrey Schesnol**, Or Adam
Marshall Rubin, Secular Humanist Jewish Circle
- California* **Gary Zarnow**, Kahal Am
Gladys Perez-Mendez, Kol Hadash
Leslie Zwick, The Pacific Community
- Connecticut* **Steve Ulman**, CHJ, Fairfield County
- D.C.* **Darlene Basch**, Machar
- Florida* **Irwin Cohn**, Cong. Beth Adam
Lois Altman, **Alice D'Souza**, CHJ, Sarasota
Paula Creed, Humanistic Jewish Havurah of SW Florida
- Illinois* **Debbie Rusnak**, Beth Chaverim
William Brook, Kol Hadash
- Maryland* **Bob Jacobson**, **Elise Saltzberg**, Baltimore Jewish Cultural Chavurah
- Massachusetts* **Diana Lee**, **Mora Rothenberg**, Kahal B'raira
- Michigan* **Harriet Maza**, Birmingham Temple
- Minnesota* **Richard Logan**, Or Emet
- New Jersey* **Craig Schlusberg**, Kahal Chaverim, NJ CHJ
- New York* **Robert Goldstein**, Beth Haskalah
Ellen C. Weiman, The City Congregation
Joan Marcus, Kol Haverim, Finger Lakes CHJ
Howard Garret, Mid-Hudson Havura
Dmitry Turovsky, Westchester CHJ
- North Carolina* **Susan Davis**, **Jenn Sessler**, Kol Haskalah
- Oregon* **Elly Adelman**, Kol Shalom, CHJ
- Washington* **Michael Horn**, Secular Jewish Circle
- Canada* **Louise Sherman**, Oraynu

KAHAL B'RAIRA IN THE WORLD

In addition to the usual activities at Kahal B'raira last year, we initiated two programs that we plan to continue into the future:



During the month of Cheshvan, KB partnered with Rabbi Greg Epstein and the Humanist Community at Harvard to raise money and participate in the Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Meal Packing Project. This family friendly event brought together people of many different religious and nonreligious backgrounds to work toward an end to food insecurity in Massachusetts.

Last December, KB presented at Limmud Boston, the local section of the International Limmud Movement, described as "a Jewish Learning Fest of culture and identity." Our program, led by madrikha Sunny Schwartz, was described in the following way: "What's god got to do with it? Can an Ignostic Be Jewish? How can one live a Jewish life and ignore God? Maintain Jewish values and ethics if we understand the *Tanakh* as story and legend rather than history? In this discussion-based session we will explore ways we maintain our Jewish identity, values and culture in the modern world. We'll also explore how we transmit Jewish values to our youth." Our program was well attended, generating a positive response among participants.

We look forward to participating in these and other cross community events as we seek to build bridges with like-minded groups in Greater Boston.

Jon Levine, SHJ Board Designee, and Gladys Maged, Administrator, Kahal B'raira, Boston

TCC MARCHES FOR CLIMATE

About 35 members of The City Congregation, one of nearly 100 Jewish sponsoring organizations, comprised the contingent of Humanistic Jews at the People's Climate March. Smaller in numbers than others, but very visible, their signs stood out! SHJ also was a sponsor.



JOIN THE HERITAGE SOCIETY Remember SHJ In Your Estate Plan

You can help ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism by remembering SHJ in your estate plan. Planned gifts can be made through wills, trusts, life insurance, retirement plan beneficiary options, and the SHJ's annuity, the Pooled Income Fund. No gift is too small and every gift helps. To ensure your legacy, contact Bonnie Cousens at 248-478-7610 or executivedirector@shj.org.

FROM SHJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BONNIE COUSENS BUILDING COALITIONS, SPREADING OUR VOICE

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is a coalition of congregations, communities, *havurot*, and individuals, working together to create a welcoming home for Humanistic Jews -- humanists, secularists, atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, and so many others. By coming together, we support each other and increase the power and strength of our voice and our movement.

Each SHJ community has its own personality. We differ in size, in leadership, in our communal home, in the services we offer our members. Some communities are small, with lay leaders, meeting only once a month in people's homes. Some are mid-sized, meeting more frequently, sometimes in rented spaces and sometimes in homes, with some paid staff and leaders. And some are large, meeting in permanent homes, on a weekly basis, led by rabbis, paid staff, and volunteers. Some are senior communities and others have schools. Some are very active on social justice issues, and others lean more towards community service. All provide holiday celebrations and adult education. All have volunteer leadership, serving on boards, committees, and in other roles. And all share a philosophy, a commitment to celebrating Jewish culture and promoting humanistic values.

Our Jewish identity is grounded in the natural world. We seek the meaning of our celebrations in Jewish history, natural events, human needs, and human achievements. We study Jewish culture and teach our children about Judaism. We strive to make our words and actions reflect our beliefs. It is often what distinguishes Humanistic Judaism from the other branches of Judaism. It is why we choose to be Humanistic Jews.

Our identity as Humanistic Jews would not be complete if we focused only on the Jewish component. Our humanistic values also shape our Jewish identity. And it is often these values that lead us to adopt positions on issues of importance in the modern world.

As you, our members, told us in response to our membership survey several years ago, our philosophy, increased visibility, and speaking out on ethical issues are the most important reasons you join the SHJ and our affiliated communities. We can increase the visibility of Humanistic Judaism by providing a voice on issues that relate to our values, especially when other organizations (both Jewish

and secular) are speaking up. If we want to be recognized as a legitimate fifth branch of Judaism (which we do), we need to have a seat at the table, we need to speak out. When SHJ joins an amicus brief, when we issue a statement, sign a letter, or publish a press release, SHJ is our voice for our values on the issues of today.



SHJ has specific guidelines that define the issues we choose to adopt positions on. The guidelines are:

The Society speaks out on issues that promote our core ethical values.

In assessing whether an issue meets our criteria, first we ask: "Are we advocating evidence-based policy solutions that promote the core ethical values of freedom, dignity and self-esteem for every human being?" This is a prerequisite. If so, then the resolution must relate to at least one of the below criteria:

- separation of church and state, OR
- Jewish identity/culture, OR
- a position with which an overwhelming majority of the SHJ are likely to agree.

These guidelines were adopted by the SHJ Board of Directors, which is composed of designees from the affiliated communities and members without communities. These guidelines enable us to express our voice on important issues that affect us. By adopting positions, we speak out for what we believe, we bring our words and actions together. And we become known to others who share our view on a variety of issues, to organizations that invite SHJ to add our Humanistic Jewish voice to their efforts, to join with them in speaking out on these issues, especially those related to the separation of church and state. And so, SHJ has joined coalitions, signed on to amicus briefs, signed letters, and issued press releases about these activities, activities often initiated by our coalition partners. And with each action, SHJ and Humanistic Judaism become a bit more visible and better known to our natural allies within both the Jewish and secular communities. And new people learn the joys of joining Humanistic Jewish communities.

SUPPORT HUMANISTIC JUDAISM ... WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU!

A Cause YOU Can Believe In

Humanistic Judaism represents the emergence of a distinct form of Judaism for today, focused on human needs, human ethics, and human dignity. Your membership helps ensure that Humanistic Judaism will remain a vital option for generations to come.

A Voice for Humanistic Values

SHJ speaks out, expressing our Humanistic Jewish viewpoint on such concerns as separation of church and state, civil rights, and women's health care. By issuing statements and press releases, joining coalitions, filing amicus briefs, and participating in rallies and conferences, SHJ stands up for the rights and dignity of all.

A Literature Grounded in the Search for Truth

As an SHJ member, you receive our member newsletter, *Humanorah* (now online); our e-newsletters, *On the Move* and *Keshet: Community Connections*, and the *Guide to Humanistic Judaism*, a concise introduction to our beliefs and practices. The Society's journal *Humanistic Judaism* reaches beyond SHJ membership, increasing our visibility. The Society's online resource center for leaders provides up to date ceremonial and educational materials. The Society's online bookstore stocks an extensive list of original publications.

A Home for Our Children & Grandchildren

Our young people are our future! The Society provides assistance in the development of youth education programs for individuals and communities to give our youth the opportunity to learn more about their Humanistic Jewish identity. The Society's recently published *Recommended Topical Curriculum for Children's Education Programs* offers a framework for communities' Sunday school pro-

grams. The SHJ youth group, HuJews, sponsors social activities and community service projects, and holds an annual conclave where teens and college students strengthen their connection to Humanistic Judaism and form lasting friendships with young Humanistic Jews from across North America.

Programs for Rabbinic Training & Adult Education

Our International Institute, with support from the SHJ, offers adult education seminars in SHJ communities and trains rabbis and leaders in North America and Israel, who serve local communities, lead Humanistic Jewish holiday celebrations, and conduct weddings, baby namings, Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies, and funerals. Institute minicolloquia bring together a stellar cast of Jewish scholars and Humanistic Jewish leaders to focus attention on the Secular Humanistic Jewish movement.

Video Celebrations of Judaism

SHJ YouTube videos make Humanistic Judaism more accessible to a younger demographic and help to showcase the beliefs and practices of Humanistic Judaism.

Support for Local Communities

The **Sherwin T. Wine Group Development Fund**, established in honor of Rabbi Wine's sixtieth birthday, helps nurture and develop Secular Humanistic Jewish communities by supporting rabbinic visits to aid in the development and growth of new and existing communities.

The **Miriam Jerris Community Development Fund**, established in honor of Rabbi Jerris' ordination, helps communities promote themselves. It funds matching grants to communities for advertising field visits and programs with Rabbi Jerris.

Your Generosity Makes a Difference.

Your gift to the SHJ can ensure the future of Humanistic Judaism.



Contact me about the Pooled Income Fund or a planned gift.

I am enclosing a tax deductible donation to the SHJ:

\$136 \$236 \$360

\$150 \$250 \$536

Name: _____ Phone (H): _____ (W): _____

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Building Community: Invest in What You Believe

by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

When I think about how my life has been enriched by my involvement in Humanistic Judaism and the Society for Humanistic Judaism, I am overwhelmed with gratitude. This gratitude is directed toward Rabbi Sherwin Wine, The Birmingham Temple, the Society, and the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. Without the dedication of professionals and countless volunteers, my professional and personal life would have been profoundly diminished.

Being involved in Humanistic Judaism has enabled me to:

- Participate in Jewish life with philosophical integrity – I can “say what I believe and believe what I say.”
- Teach my children the truth about Judaism and the world around us. Truth matters. Mythology is distinguished from history, legend from fact.
- Be part of a community that supports me in times of joy and sorrow.
- Help create communities in North America.
- Fulfill my childhood dream to become a rabbi.

These gifts are not measurable. They are intangible, unique, and, consequently, very precious.

Part of being a Humanist means embracing generosity. It means making communities available for those who seek them. It means accepting responsibility by working actively to nurture new communities and by supporting those who are already engaged in community organization and development. And it means sharing the passion we have for Humanistic Judaism both by working for and financially supporting the organizations that make it a reality.



We can realize a strong Humanistic Judaism by investing in it. I invest in Humanistic Judaism because we are a small movement where every gift is valued. I invest in Humanistic Judaism because it enriches my life and the life of my family. I invest in Humanistic Judaism because it enables me to live my values. I invest in Humanistic Judaism because I appreciate what it provides so much that I want it to continue and be available to and for others. Please join me in this long term investment. It's worth every hour and every dollar!

Resources for Creating Meaningful Jewish Experiences

As Jewish congregations and communities look for ways to engage their members and create significant and meaningful Jewish experiences, there are a number of organizations doing innovative and creative work. The UJA-Federation of New York has developed two initiatives: *Synergy* and *Connected Congregations*, both working to enhance the value of congregational life.

Information can be found at: <http://www.ujafedny.org/synergy/>, <http://www.ujafedny.org/connected-congregations/>, and <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Connected-Communities/183822021687856>. Or contact Miriam Jerris at rabbim@shj.org for more information.

Got EMAIL?

Send your e-mail address to info@shj.org and begin to receive the SHJ e-newsletters, “Keshet: Community Connections” and “On the Move,” with timely news about SHJ communities, the Society’s activities, and links of interest.

2013-2014 ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

The Society for Humanistic Judaism is pleased to thank the contributors to the 2013-2014 Fundraising Campaign.

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remember a loved one.
SHJ Tributes for every occasion
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Wishing you a speedy recovery
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Congratulations on the birth of your daughter Leah
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To Irv Miller
In memory of your wife, Marcia
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Congratulations on the birth of your daughter
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In memory of your mother Eunice Addelson
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In honor of receiving your PhD from Spertus Institute
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INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE 2014 COLLOQUIUM

Evolution or Revolution?

Intermarriage, Jewish Culture & the Future of Jewish Community

Jewish community stands at a turning point, and its future is unclear. What will be the Jewish character of the State of Israel? How has freedom and intermarriage changed Jewish identity? Are Jewish denominations a thing of the past, as people increasingly pick and choose their connections? What will Jewish community look like in the next generation: will it be an evolution, or a revolution? Join Humanistic Jews at the **2014 Colloquium**, in suburban Detroit, November 14-16, to explore some responses to these pressing questions.

Presenters at the colloquium will include IISHJ deans Rabbi Adam Chalom & Rabbi Sivan Maas, Paul Golin

of the Jewish Outreach Institute, and Keren McGinity of the Cohen Center at Brandeis University. A panel of members of the Association of Humanistic Rabbis and Merchav (Israel), as well as IISHJ-Certified Leaders/Vegvayzers/Madrikhim-ot, will provide their thoughts on these issues.

The Saturday evening Havdala Celebration will feature the ordination of Susan Averbach (CA) and Edward Klein (NY).

Don't miss this exciting, thought-provoking weekend. Registration and details may be found online at <http://tiny.cc/fy5dmx>.

SHJ UPCOMING EVENTS

September 24-25, 2014	ROSH HASHANA — SHANA TOVA!
September 24-28, 2014	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS ROSH HASHANA VISIT to Kol Haskalah, NC. Contact: info@kolhaskalah.org .
October 3-4, 2014	KOL NIDRE & YOM KIPPUR
October 3-5, 2014	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS YOM KIPPUR VISIT to Westchester Community for Humanistic Judaism, NY. Contact: info@wchj.org .
October 8-15, 2013	SUKKOT
October 17, 2013	SIMHAT TORAH
November 14-16, 2014	RABBINIC ORDINATION and IISHJ COLLOQUIUM: "Evolution, or Revolution? Intermarriage, Jewish Culture & the Future of the Jewish Community," Farmington Hills, MI. Contact: info@iishj.org .
November 21-23, 2014	RABBI MIRIAM JERRIS VISIT TO KAHAL CHAVERIM, NJ Congregation for Humanistic Judaism. Contact: (973) 927-0078, info@chjmc.org .
December 16-24, 2014	HAPPY HANUKKA!
March 20-22, 2014	HUJEWS TEEN AND COLLEGE CONCLAVE, "Identities," Suburban Detroit, MI. Contact: info@shj.org or hujews@shj.org .