



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Observe 5766 with Beth Chai

Beth Chai welcomes anyone interested in participating in thoughtful, friendly and fulfilling High Holiday services to join us this year. Our services are held at Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church, 6301 River Road, Bethesda Maryland (entrance on Whittier Blvd.) Services are free for members of Beth Chai, and free child-care is available at all adult services. We offer tickets to first-time attendees at a special introductory rate of \$25 for one service; the regular ticket price for non-members is \$75.



More information on our High Holiday services can be found on our web site at www.bethchai.org — click on the “Events” page link in the left hand column on the main page. Non-members can also pay for their tickets online by clicking on the “Donate” credit card button, which takes you to our PayPal page, and then following the instructions you will find there. Tickets may also be purchased at the door with cash or check. Please arrive in time to purchase tickets before services start. High Holiday information continues on page 5.)



Jewish Humanism Talks Set for Sept. 23 & 25

Find it difficult to explain Jewish Humanism? Want to share the idea with family, friends, and co-workers? Then join us on Friday evening September 23rd at 7:00 PM at the DCJCC. After a brief Shabbat service, Rabbi Blecher will give a talk on “What is Jewish Humanism?” It is a wonderful opportunity to meet with old friends and make some new ones. Most importantly, it is a chance to broaden our conversation with other people about who we are and what we do. If you can’t make it on Friday night, try attending Rabbi Blecher’s talk on Sunday, Sept. 25 at 4 pm at the Rockville JCC. And please do invite others who might be interested! For the exact addresses of the two locations, see the box on page 5.

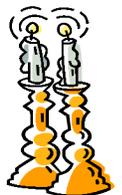
New Year Begins with New Adult Education Programs: “Open Mike” Followed by “350 Years of Jewish Life in America”

With the start of the Beth Chai Family School year on September 11, the adult education program also begins a new year of varied and thought-provoking sessions. Planning for these programs goes on throughout the year, and you are invited to be part of the process. The Program Committee article on page 6 gives more details. Program notes for the September sessions can also be found on page 6.

September Shabbat: Service and Shmoozing

Friday, September 16. The first Shabbat of the fall will be purely social, a chance to catch up with friends after the summer break, to welcome newcomers, to chat at long last with somebody one’s never quite managed to get to know—and all in the gentle and relaxed ambience of Shabbat. To do this, we’re giving the program portion of our Shabbat evening an extra month of vacation. We will provide refreshments after our customary Shabbat service ends at around 8:30 PM, leaving the rest of the evening open for conversation and fellowship.

We hope this comes as good news to everyone. It should allow families with young children to stay longer than usual, fostering acquaintanceships at all age levels. It also gives prospective members an opportunity to meet Rabbi Art Blecher, Education Director Rain Zohav, and others, and to learn about Beth Chai through informal conversations rather than through our formal programs and events. (Article continues on page 3.)



Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
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Ken Jacobson	Program Chair		kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Sheldon Hofferan	Liturgy Ctte./Past Pres.		ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
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Marji Ross	Music Committee		mross@eaglepub.com
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Beth Chai Web Site		www.bethchai.org ; info@bethchai.org

Financial Need Policy: Beth Chai welcomes anyone to attend services, become a member, or have their children attend our Jewish Family School, regardless of ability to pay. Considerations available include extended payment plans, service exchange, and fee reduction. Financial aid determination will be made on a case by case basis. Please contact Diane Page for assistance.

b Community News a

Engagements

Our member Josh Lubell has become engaged to Jenny Silverman. An October wedding is planned.

Our soon-to-be-a-member Jill Newburger is engaged to Frank McCowan; their wedding will be in July.

Get Well Wishes

A speedy recovery to David Zalkind, who recently underwent surgery to remove an infected gall bladder.



Thank-You Note

A Beth Chai member writes: "I want to thank everyone who helped me during my illness last year, including donating leave, watching my (then) three-year-old son, and donating money for child care. I received enough donated leave so that I had full paychecks the entire time even though I did have to take a lot of time off from work. Your assistance and expressions of concern were and are still greatly appreciated. I want to let everyone know that I am doing well, and am hoping for a much less eventful year this year."

Condolences

Herb Buxbaum, the father of our member, Jim Buxbaum, died on July 5 after a long illness. He was in his 80s and lived close to Jim and Amanda and their three daughters, Samantha, Elizabeth, and Jessica. The Buxbaums attend Friday services often, and the children are in our school. The congregation sends its deepest condolences to the Buxbaum family.

Florence Feldenkris, mother of Alan Feldenkris, died on July 19 in Cleveland, where she lived. The congregation sends its deepest condolences to Alan, his wife Robin Graine, and their family.

Bar Mitzvah of Byron Hulcher

Saturday, September 10 at 10 AM. Laurie and Charles Hulcher cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the bar mitzvah of their son Byron at Beth Chai Congregation at River Road U.C. A Kiddush will follow the service.



Rabbi's Message

The High Holy Day season is the great gathering of the Jewish People. It is the time when the greatest percentage of Jews act upon their identity as members of the civilization of Judaism. It is the season when Jews most seek out congregational life. Jewish households come to synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur because we want to touch something important and meaningful.

When we gather together during the Jewish High Holy Days, we are truly building a sanctuary of time within the often exhausting passage of day upon day. We take refuge for a brief while from the stress and harshness of life in modern society. We set aside some time. We set aside time for affirmation and for the celebration of being. We set aside time for remembering who we are and where we have come from, and for reconnecting with the memory of all we have lost. We set aside time for acknowledging our pain and for healing the bruises of spirit that occur as we move through the universe.

It is not the *where*, but the *when* that makes it all holy. For it is the very act itself of reconvening the community year after year that is the real sacred event. The presence of the people endows the sanctuary with holiness; the place by itself has no power to bestow holiness upon people.

Whenever we join together as community for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we come home to the ideas and sounds and images and literature we share as members of the Jewish People. We merge our individual histories with our national history, and we conjoin our personal values with Judaism's ethical heritage.

Very soon we will gather again at the beginning of the New Year 5766. Together, we will recreate the ancient pageant: to mourn the losses of our past, to reaffirm our existence in the present, and to proclaim our hope for the promise of the future.

With my best wishes to you all for a New Year of sweetness and light,

Rabbi Arthur C. Blecher



Shabbat and Shmoozing, continued from front page.

This Shabbat get-together serves to complement the more formal presentations of the congregation's features and philosophies that are taking place on Sept. 23 and 25 (the Jewish Humanism talks described in the front page article). And it should be a source of all-around, low-key fun.

Schedule

7 to 8 PM: A light supper consisting of Middle Eastern fare and costing \$10 per person will be set out buffet style at 7. Those wishing to join in are asked to sign up by contacting Ken Jacobson before noon on Thursday, September 15, either by email at kenjacobson@hotmail.com or by phone at 202-462-2472.

8 to 8:30 PM: Beth Chai's Shabbat service, which features a humanistic Kiddush, thought-provoking readings, and roles for children wishing to participate, begins at 8.

8:30 to 9:30 PM: Shmoozing and do-it-yourself entertainment, enhanced by cookies and beverages, follows the service.



Location of all Beth Chai Shabbats (unless otherwise indicated):
Beth Chai Congregation at River Road U.C., Fireside Room (2nd floor)
6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.), Bethesda

From the Education Director

Dear Congregants,

If you have not yet registered your children for Sunday School, please do so. We will waive the registration fee for any students registered by September 11. This assists in our planning for the school year.

The first day of Sunday School is **September 11** at Burning Tree Elementary. (Although we explored various alternative sites this summer, in the end we opted not to move the school.) We begin at 9:30 AM together in the All-Purpose Room. At 10:00, students will go to their classes and parents will meet with me. This is a mandatory parents meeting. We will meet from 10:00 to 11 AM, when we will all join together for a brunch. This is a new idea we are trying out this year to help new people get acquainted and to help all of us reconnect after the summer break. Please let us know how you like it.

Please bring your checkbooks on Sunday, **September 18**. We will be pre-registering for our walk for the homeless. Everyone who is pre-registered will receive a free T-shirt. We will once again be designating the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership as the agency we wish to benefit. This group has been exceptionally effective in helping recent immigrants from Central America move from homelessness to home ownership.



Also, we will be collecting school supplies for the LTHP (Latino Transitional Housing Partnership) during the month of September. So please bring notebooks, binders, pencils, crayons, scissors, glue sticks, compasses, and backpacks to school and adult ed. If you have children, you can just bring some of the items on their school list so that we get a variety of supplies for different ages. The staff at the LTHP has very much appreciated our donations of school supplies in the past. If you can't decide — a CVS gift card is also very much appreciated!

I have good news from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. They have awarded us two grants this year. One is to continue and expand our teen program. This year we will be adding a rising teen program for our 7th graders. The first meeting will be during snack on Sunday, **September 25**. This will be an opportunity to meet our new teen advisor, Matt Krouner. This meeting is for both parents and rising teens. Any 6th grade parents and students who want to attend are also welcome.

The second grant is what is called a cluster grant and is in conjunction with Bethesda-Chevy Chase Community Group. These are competitive grants that are designed to encourage cooperation between different Jewish groups. Our grant is funding a Yiddish Culture and Tzedakah Day on **October 30**. More details will follow.

I hope you had a great summer vacation. I look forward to seeing all of our returning students and parents and meeting our new students and parents.

*B'Shalom,
Rain Zohav*

More School Info on Beth Chai Web Site

We know people don't always save their newsletters. If you're ever unsure about a Sunday School date, or you want to check the Adult Education topic before you head out, just go to our web site, bethchai.org and click on the Sunday School link on the left-hand column on the main page and scroll down to the calendar. The dates are posted for the whole school year; details for each date are posted about one month in advance.



Reminder on Member Survey

The last newsletter informed you that the Beth Chai Board is conducting a survey of our members and their families. Our survey committee has produced a well thought-out questionnaire that you should find not very demanding; it should be out by the High Holidays. We invite all adult and teen members of each household fill out the survey — separately, if so desired. To maximize the number of responses, we will make the survey available by email and US Mail — and we are also exploring the possibility of having the survey posted as a web-based survey. It is very important for everyone to help Beth Chai with your response. Looking forward to hearing from you!



High Holiday Schedule

We hope everyone joining us for services this year will participate in our social action drive (see accompanying article, next column) by bringing donations to services.

If you have any questions about services for the High Holidays, ticket prices for guests, or need any other information you can email us at info@bethchai.org or call 301-229-7400 and leave a message, and we will return your call.

— Mark your calendars —

Rosh Hashanah

Tuesday, October 4

9:30 AM Family Service,

10:30 AM Adult Service

Kol Nidre

Wednesday, October 12 at 7:30 PM

Yom Kippur

Thursday, October 13

9:30 AM Family Service,

10:30 AM Adult Service

6:30 PM Break-the-Fast Potluck

Beth Chai provides fish platters and beverages; please bring a meatless dish that serves 4 to 6 people.

All services at Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC
6301 River Road, Bethesda, MD
(Entrance to parking lot on Whittier Blvd.)

"What Is Jewish Humanism?" Locations

Friday, September 23 at 7 PM
Shabbat Service and Discussion
The DCJCC
1529 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC

Sunday, September 25 at 4 PM
JCC of Greater Washington
6125 Montrose Road
Rockville, MD

Fall Social Action Events

by Josh Lubell

Beth Chai's first social action event of the 2005-2006 school year is our Help-the-Homeless Mini-Walk Pre-Registration on **September 18**.

This year, unlike past years, we will have a pre-registration for our annual mini-walk to benefit the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership. Although you don't have to register in advance to participate in the **October 30 Walk**, pre-registration will be required in order to get a Help The Homeless T-shirt.

Participation fees are \$25 per adult and \$15 per youth (age 25 and younger). Be sure to bring your checkbook to school on September 18. Sorry, we can't take cash.

Last year's mini-walk raised over \$1000 dollars, which was matched with additional funds from the Fannie Mae Foundation. This is a great opportunity for Beth Chai to help in the struggle to end homelessness!

Our other major social action project of the fall season is our annual High Holidays contribution to the food and gift drive coordinated by the Washington, DC area Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA).

As in past years, we will be collecting non-perishable grocery items and grocery/pharmacy gift cards for needy families served by the JSSA. Pharmacy gift cards are especially useful as they can be used to purchase hard-to-afford prescription drugs.

The October newsletter will have more details, but it's not too early to start saving up non-perishable foods and other goods to bring to the High Holiday services.



Adult Education — September Sessions

September 11, 10 to 11 AM: “Open Mike.” With parents attending a Sunday School orientation from 10 to 11 AM, and all Beth Chai members invited to a welcome-back brunch scheduled for 11 AM to noon, this session of Adult Ed is destined to be low on people and short on time. So, rather than an abbreviated program that many regulars would just have to miss, there will be an impromptu get-together at which anything goes. Summer adventures? Current events? Adult Ed programming? The cinema? The floor will be open to these or whatever other topics inspire, intrigue, or nettle those who show. We’ll meet at the entrance to the Multi-Purpose Room at 10 and look for a place to settle down — which could even be outside on the lawn, weather permitting.

September 18: “350 Years of Jewish Life in America—Part I.” The first Jewish community in North America is said to date from 1654, so it’s actually been 351 years ... but who’s counting? In honor of the anniversary celebrations that began in 2004, Rabbi Art Blecher will lead a two-part series devoted to the three major periods of immigration of Jews to America. Covered will be the characteristics of the Jewish groups who immigrated in each period, the socioeconomic crises that motivated them, and the kinds of communities they formed in the New World. This first session will focus on the two phases of West European Jewish immigration, the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic.

September 25: “350 Years of Jewish Life in America—Part II.” Concluding the series on the presence of Jews in America, Rabbi Blecher will talk about those who arrived in the wave of immigration from Eastern Europe. As in the first session, he will offer a portraits of the group and of the communities they formed in America as well as discussing the reasons that they came.



All programs begin at 10 am and end at noon, unless otherwise indicated. Location: Burning Tree School, 7900 Beech Tree Road, Bethesda, MD. Bagels and coffee provided. Programs are free for members, guests, and prospective members.

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Program Committee Meeting

Beth Chai’s Program Committee will meet at 7:30 PM on Wednesday evening, September 7, at the home of Ken Jacobson in Silver Spring, to build the Adult Education and Shabbat schedules for the coming year. All Beth Chai members are invited to attend and are urged to bring along their ideas, questions, and critiques to help shape our presentations and discussions for the 2005-06 year. Also on the agenda this year is the possibility of holding some of the Shabbat evenings at a Virginia location, in response to numerous requests from members who reside there.

Those wishing to attend the meeting are asked to RSVP by email (kenjacobson@hotmail.com) or phone (202-462-2472); driving directions will gladly be provided. All who cannot be there in person but would like have their suggestions or views on either programming or Shabbat location conveyed to those present are invited to email them in advance to both Program co-chairs, Andrew Strongin (astrongin@starpower.net) and Ken (email address above).

Get Involved with the Beth Chai Book & Media Sale



Beth Chai's annual Book and Media Sale is on the horizon (okay, it's a little further off than that), but we want you to start gathering all those books, CDs, DVDs, games, quality toys, and similar goodies for the November 20th event. It's always a fun-filled occasion for all the family. Don't forget to check with your neighbors, both for material for the sale and to invite them to attend. Of course, the yummy Beth Chai Cafe will be in full operation to keep you fortified throughout the sale. Once our year starts, you will be able to bring the "stuff" to Beth Chai events as you accumulate it. And a special mitzvah would be to volunteer to be one of the crew that will be helping to make the whole event possible. Contact Ron Leve for further information (202-496-9292, TheRon@comcast.net).

Keep In Touch with Beth Chai via Listserv

At Beth Chai we have not one but two ways of communicating by email. First, we have the Beth Chai announcements list — a weekly email message from Beth Chai about services, adult education programs, Sunday School events, schedule changes, and other information that supplements the monthly Beth Chai newsletter. This weekly message can be sent to everyone who is interested in Beth Chai, whether or not you're a member. Second, we have the Beth Chai Board Listserv (on YahooGroups): Despite its name, this group email discussion list is open to all members. In the Beth Chai Board Listserv — a separate communication from the announcements list — we tend to focus on administrative and related matters — the daily tasks of running Beth Chai. If you don't receive the weekly Beth Chai announcements and would like to get them, please contact Beth Chai Secretary Diane Sonnenberg at dianesonnenberg@mac.com. And if you'd like to join Beth Chai's YahooGroup listserv, just send a request to Membership Chair Julie Zalkind at juliehz@erols.com.



DC Unity Walk on September 11

by Ron Leve

On September 11 the "DC Embassy Row Unity Walk" will draw people from all religious faiths speaking out by their presence for the following purpose: "We walk together as neighbors from many faiths and cultures. We gather in peace to demonstrate our unity, recalling the spirit of togetherness that grew out of September 11 and rejecting the paths of despair and revenge. We commemorate this day because concern for each other's welfare is the shared hope of us all."

The walk will start at Washington Hebrew Congregation and end at the Islamic Mosque with a number of stops along the way at various houses of worship. It is tentatively scheduled to start around 2 or 2:30 PM. For more information please visit <http://www.dcunitywalk.com>. This would be a wonderful opportunity for your kids or teens to participate. Contact Ron Leve (see Beth Chai Directory, page 2) if you'd like to walk as part of a group.



*9/11 Unity Walk on Embassy Row
September 11, 2005*

Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Wed., Sept. 7 at 7:30 pm	Program Committee meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Ken Jacobson and Mary Ellen Petrisko. Email kenjacobson@hotmail.com or call 301-920-2094 to RSVP and get directions.
Sat., Sept. 10 at 10 AM.	Bar Mitzvah of Byron Hulcher. All Beth Chai members are invited to attend the service.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier Blvd.)
Sun., Sept. 11 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	First day of Beth Chai Family School. Mandatory parents' meeting; welcome back gathering for all.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Sept. 11 from 7 to 9 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Julie & David Zalkind in N. Arlington. Call 703-522-1023 or email juliehz@erols.com to RSVP and get directions.
Fri., Sept. 16 at 8 PM; light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat Service & Schmoozing (no formal program — see article, front page for details).	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm., 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Sept. 18 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "350 Years of Jewish Life in America" presented by Rabbi Art Blecher. Part 1 of a 2-part series.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Fri., Sept. 23 at 7 PM Sun., Sept. 25 at 4 PM	"What Is Jewish Humanism?" talks, presented by Rabbi Art Blecher. The Friday night talk includes a brief Shabbat service.	Friday talk at DCJCC, 1529 16th St., NW, DC Sunday talk at JCC of Greater Washington, 6125 Montrose Rd., Rockville, MD
Sun., Oct. 2 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "350 Years of Jewish Life in America" presented by Rabbi Art Blecher. Part 2 of a 2-part series.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Tues., Oct. 4, 9:30 AM (family svc.) and 10:30 AM (adult svc.)	Rosh Hashanah services.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Wed., Oct. 12 at 7:30 PM Thu., Oct. 13 at 9:30 (family svc.) & 10:30 AM (adult svc.) 6:30 PM (Break-the-Fast)	Kol Nidre services Yom Kippur services in the morning; Break-the-Fast Potluck in the evening.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Oct 16 at 10 am	Sukkot in the Park. More detail/directions in Oct. newsletter.	Riverbend Park, Great Falls, VA



Beth Chai Congregation

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is Sept. 11