



# BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

## Observe 5767 with Beth Chai

Beth Chai welcomes anyone interested in participating in thoughtful, friendly, and fulfilling High Holiday services to join us: **September 23 for Rosh Hashanah, October 1 for Kol Nidre, and October 2 for Yom Kippur.** Our services are held at Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church, 6301 River Road, Bethesda Maryland. The box on page 3 has the schedule and all the details, including how to make arrangements for free childcare during the adult services.

You can also find information on our High Holiday services on our web site at [www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org). Tickets are free for members; non-members can pay for their tickets online by clicking on the credit card button, which takes you to our PayPal page; then just follow the instructions you will find there. Tickets may also be purchased at the door with cash or check (please allow extra time to purchase tickets before services start).

These days mark the most profound and challenging events in the Jewish calendar, when we reaffirm our links to the Jewish family, past and present. We look forward to seeing you and wish you a joyous new year.



## September Shabbat: Service and Shmoozing

**Friday, September 15.** Making the fall's first Shabbat a purely social occasion seemed a crowd-pleaser last September, so for the second straight year we're giving the program portion of our Shabbat evening an extra month of vacation. As before, this occasion will be given over to catching up with friends after the summer break, welcoming newcomers, chatting at long last with somebody one has never quite managed to get to know—and all in the gentle and relaxed ambience of Shabbat. We will provide refreshments after our customary Shabbat service ends at around 8:30 PM and leave the rest of the evening open for conversation and fellowship.



We're hoping this meets with the same enthusiasm this time around. It allows families with young children to stay longer than usual, fostering acquaintanceships at all age levels. It enables prospective members to meet Rabbi Art Blecher, Education Director Rain Zohav, and others, and to learn about Beth Chai through informal conversations that can complement the more formal presentations of the congregation's features and philosophies scheduled for Sept. 8 and 10 (see article on this page, opposite). Look to it as a source of all-around, low-key fun. (For schedule, see page 2.)

September 8 in DC, September 10 in MD:

## Beth Chai Presents "A Fresh Perspective on American Judaism"

Please join us for an annual Beth Chai tradition at the High Holiday season: JCC discussions on Beth Chai's approach to Judaism, led by Rabbi Arthur Blecher.

The topic is "A Fresh Perspective on American Judaism," and the talks will be held:

Friday, September 8th, 7 to 9 PM, DC Jewish Community Center Library  
1529 16th St., NW, Washington, DC  
Sunday, September 10th, 1:30 to 3 PM, Jewish Community Center  
of Greater Washington, 6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD



These two events, at convenient locations in DC and Maryland, are great ways for friends, neighbors and colleagues to discover what Beth Chai has to offer. Please help us spread the word! (Article continues on page 3.)

Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
Deborah Signer Balaschak	President		<a href="mailto:balasig@verizon.net">balasig@verizon.net</a>
Mike Wexler	Vice President		<a href="mailto:ela.mike@verizon.net">ela.mike@verizon.net</a>
Ilene Sokolsky	Treasurer		<a href="mailto:i.sokolsky@verizon.net">i.sokolsky@verizon.net</a>
Diane Page	Bookkeeper/Accts. Payable		<a href="mailto:dmpage1@comcast.net">dmpage1@comcast.net</a>
Suzanne Greenfield	Secretary/Past President		<a href="mailto:greenfieldshapiro@msn.com">greenfieldshapiro@msn.com</a>
Dr. Arthur Blecher	Rabbi		<a href="mailto:ablecher@starpower.net">ablecher@starpower.net</a>
Rain Zohav	Education Director		<a href="mailto:rainzohav@earthlink.net">rainzohav@earthlink.net</a>
Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator		<a href="mailto:crobnlynn@earthlink.net">crobnlynn@earthlink.net</a>
Julie Zalkind	Membership Chair		<a href="mailto:juliehz@erols.com">juliehz@erols.com</a>
Ken Jacobson	Program Co-chair		<a href="mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com">kenjacobson@hotmail.com</a>
Andrew Strongin	Program Co-chair		<a href="mailto:astrongin@starpower.net">astrongin@starpower.net</a>
Sheldon Hofferan	Liturgy Co-chair		<a href="mailto:ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com">ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com</a>
Rob Weinstein	Liturgy Co-chair		<a href="mailto:crobnlynn@earthlink.net">crobnlynn@earthlink.net</a>
Ron Leve	Fundraising Chair		<a href="mailto:theron@comcast.net">theron@comcast.net</a>
Howie Feinstein	Social Action/Publicity		<a href="mailto:khfeinstein@us.net">khfeinstein@us.net</a>
Marji Ross	Music Committee		<a href="mailto:mross@eaglepub.com">mross@eaglepub.com</a>
Peggy Robin	Newsletter Editor		<a href="mailto:probin@adlerrobin.com">probin@adlerrobin.com</a>
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Jules Aronson	Beth Chai Webmaster		<a href="mailto:jparonson@speakeasy.net">jparonson@speakeasy.net</a>
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Messages for Beth Chai		<a href="mailto:info@bethchai.org">info@bethchai.org</a>

**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 Shabbat *(cont'd from front page)*

### Bar Mitzvah of Ben Resnik

Members of Beth Chai are cordially invited to attend Ben Resnik's Bar Mitzvah service, which will be held at Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, 9600 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, on Saturday, September 16 at 10:30 AM. For directions visit [www.cedarlane.org](http://www.cedarlane.org).



### New Baby

Congratulations to Jenny and Josh Lubell on the birth of their son, Alexander Justin Lubell (a.k.a. Alex), born on Monday, August 7 at 10:26 AM. A bris was held on August 14 at their home in Rockville.

### Off to College

Congratulations to our Beth Chai Family School graduates who are starting college in the fall: Peter Elliott at the University of Virginia, Amy Herman at Sarah Lawrence, and Leila Virji at Emory University.

### Schedule

**7-8 PM:** A light supper, consisting of Middle Eastern fare and costing \$10 per person, will be set out buffet style at 7 PM. Those wishing to join in are asked to sign up by contacting Ken Jacobson before noon on Thursday, September 14, either by email at [kenjacobson@hotmail.com](mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com) or by phone at 202-462-2472.

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

**8:30-9:30 PM:** 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., MD

## Schedule of Services

**Rosh Hashanah**  
 Saturday, September 23  
 9:30 AM Family Service,  
 10:30 AM Adult Service

**Kol Nidre**  
 Sunday, October 1 at 7:30 PM

**Yom Kippur**  
 Monday, October 2  
 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 for 4 to 6 people.

Services are free for members of Beth Chai. For non-member tickets the cost is \$50 per service. Tickets may be purchased in advance by credit card on the "Events" page of our web site at [www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org), or may be reserved by leaving a message on our voicemail line, 301-229-7400.

Free childcare is available at all adult services for children age 2 and older. Please send an email to Sandi Foster, [fostersa@comcast.net](mailto:fostersa@comcast.net) to say how many children, of what ages and gender, will be in childcare during which services.

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

## Beth Chai Fall Social Action: Collections for the Needy at All 3 High Holiday Services

We hope everyone joining us for services this year will participate in our Social Action Drive by bringing donations to services. We are collecting food and grocery gift cards, as well as school supplies for needy children



Needed items include:

- Y Canned goods
- Y Other non-perishable groceries
- Y Grocery gift cards
- Y Pharmacy gift cards
- Y Binders
- Y Paper
- Y Pens and pencils
- Y Calculators
- Y Backpacks
- Y Office supply store gift cards

Thanks for your generosity!

## Introduction to Beth Chai (continued from front page)



The following description of Beth Chai was offered by Rabbi Art Blecher and the Board of Directors:

"Beth Chai is a unique community that enjoys the full participation of believers and non-believers alike. We treat everyone in our congregation equally, including all members of interfaith families. We are part of the rich tradition of Judaism, and we draw our strength from the vast repository of Jewish sources, but we do not exist for the purpose of worshipping God. We invite you to join this independent community and help us explore, study, and celebrate our Jewish heritage."

You are invited to learn more about us at [www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org).

## Letter from the Education Director - September 2006

*Dear Congregants,*

The first brisk, cool air and clear sunshine are greeting me today as the summer ends and fall begins. All the hard work of summer is about to pay off. (Well, not my tomato plant—it got eaten!)

I am thrilled with this year's faculty, which includes both great returning teachers and new teachers (most of whom found us, rather than the other way around). Thanks so much to the many members who helped get out the word.

Our first day of Sunday school will be on **September 10**. We will begin the day at 9:30 AM with our music assembly. Students will go to classes at 10:00. The day for adults will include a presentation about Beth Chai social action activities for the year and a short meeting for participants to divide up the many volunteer tasks needed in order to run the various parts of the Beth Chai Family School, including the pre-school, the post-mitzvah class, and the adult education program.

We will meet on **September 17**, but not on September 24 due to **Rosh Hashanah**. I encourage all the families with school age children to attend our **Family High Holiday Services**. With advance notice we provide childcare for children (ages 2 - 11) during the adult service.

There are several new programs and ideas for innovation this year. We received two grants from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington. One is for a joint Family Education Day with the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Community Group. The day will focus on Jewish multiculturalism and feature a wonderful local high school Israeli dance troupe. The other grant is for some professional arts programming and a first-ever Beth Chai retreat. Local Jewish artist, Marilyn Banner, will be coming in to help us create mixed media family collages, and our students will have the opportunity to create their own lasting Seder plates or Kiddush cups from Color Me Mine.

The retreat will be in the spring. Look for more details in the newsletter as the time gets closer. We will be taking a straw poll of the congregation in the fall to see if it will work better for most people to have the retreat held over Shabbat, from Friday night to Saturday night, or begin with Saturday dinner, include Havdalah, and go through Sunday afternoon. Either way, there is budget for some kind of professional music — either klezmer or sing-along — or Israeli dancing, or a lecture/demonstration.

We are very grateful to the Jewish Federation's Initiatives in Congregational Education grants (I.C.E.) for allowing us the opportunity to try out new things and to enhance our programming. We will have more details about each program closer to the date of the program.

Another great idea that has been proposed is to have a **Sukkot** camp-out! The idea is to camp out on Saturday night, **October 7**, and build the sukkah on Sunday morning as usual. Those families who have Monday off for Columbus Day on October 9 could sleep in the sukkah Sunday night. If you would like to help search out a suitable site for this, please let us know.



We also have a new Parents Council. This group is replacing the School Committee. Its mission is to assist the school in any way possible, but in particular, by giving useful feedback to the Education Director and helping with tasks that may have fallen through the cracks. If you would like to participate on the Parents Council, which plans to meet monthly, as needed, right after Sunday School, please let Deborah Balaschak know.

Besides ordering materials, interviewing, hiring and meeting with teachers, and putting together all the handouts needed for the first day of school, I have been revising the second/third grade curriculum this summer. I think the new approach, which is based upon Jewish values and the use of a wide range of stories, will be very engaging for the students. They will also be learning about Jewish holidays in the context of the Jewish calendar.

*(Continued at the top of the next page)*

### Education Director's Letter, cont'd from page 4

I am planning several family education days this year, including a Mitzvah Day that will focus on disability awareness, and a Tu B'Shevat seder for grades K – 3.



The work I do in the summer is a lot like planting, weeding, watering and watching things grow. Then, when I see you all come into the all-purpose room that first morning in September, it is like harvesting those first delicious tomatoes. Perhaps the gardening metaphor is so close to me this year because the kibbutz in Israel, where I was a member for seven years and worked in the landscape design department, is in the area that has been under attack. As of this writing, none of the rockets hit exactly there; however, they were very near. My kibbutz is located north of Haifa, between Acco and Nahariya. This is a very difficult time for us all. Hopefully, the ceasefire will hold.

Please register for Sunday school before the first day, if possible, so we can plan to have enough materials for each class! I look forward to seeing you all on September 10, promptly at 9:30 AM.

*L'Shanah Tova,  
Rain Zohav*

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## Adult Education in September

**September 10. Social Action on the Move.** Beth Chai is looking to broaden and deepen its work for social justice this year by offering members a wider variety of links leading to closer, more regular participation in their communities. The Social Action Committee's new chairman, Howie Feinstein, will lead an hour-long discussion during which he'll put forward some ideas he and the committee have been developing — prominent among them, activities focusing on the areas of anti-discrimination and human rights — and ask all attending Adult Ed for their views and suggestions. The point is boosting Beth Chai's contribution to and presence in the surrounding society. Be in on shaping our involvement! After a short break, at about 11:15 AM, we will have a meeting to recruit volunteers to help with Sunday morning tasks for the school year; please see Rain Zohav's School Letter, previous page, for details.

**September 17. Debate in Israel As Seen Through Its Press.** At times, events in the Middle East have produced a rigid unanimity in the U.S. Jewish community that has sharply contrasted with a multi-sided —and impassioned —debate in Israel. Is this one of those times? To help us find out, we'll hear a number of brief reports from Beth Chai members, each of whom has followed an Israeli publication over the Internet in the preceding weeks. Then, of course, we'll discuss what we've heard. *Note:* We're likely still looking for volunteers to contribute to the press review even as you read this notice, so if you'd like to take part, please contact Ken Jacobson by phone at 202-462-2472 or by email at [kenjacobson@hotmail.com](mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com) — but don't delay.



**September 24.** No Adult ed/Beth Chai Family School during the Rosh Hashanah holiday.

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.

# The Beth Chai Listserv

by Ron Leve

At its August meeting the Beth Chai Board of Directors approved a new listserv to further promote contact and community amongst our members. For some years Beth Chai has had a listserv designated "Beth Chai Board." This name has been confusing for many folks, since it appeared to be limited either to Beth Chai Board members or to Beth Chai Board matters. In reality, it has been open to any Beth Chai member, and while Board matters are discussed on this forum, it has also been open to general topics relating to Beth Chai, its members, and Judaism.

The new list will bring about a change in the way the Beth Chai Board list is used. The Beth Chai Board list will continue, but will now be limited to Board of Directors' matters and other topics related to the governance of Beth Chai. Any announcements of general interest to Beth Chai members will be on the new list described below. Anyone is welcome to subscribe to this new list, and in fact, all on the present Beth Chai Board list will remain members. If you do not wish to be on the Beth Chai Board list, you can either remove yourself or send an email request to me at [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net).

The new list has been created at Yahoo Groups and simply named BethChai. As was formerly the case with the Beth Chai Board list, the new list will be available for general Beth Chai announcements and various discussions of Judaism. But more than that, the new list can be used by Beth Chai members to communicate about topics of interest to them that they believe would be of interest to other members on the list. We ask you to exercise discretion and observe "netiquette," so that the list can remain unmoderated.

All current members of Beth Chai Board have been made members of this group. To post to the listserv, send your message to [BethChai@yahoogroups.com](mailto:BethChai@yahoogroups.com). The home page is at <http://groups.yahoo.com/BethChai>. If you do not wish to participate in the new list, you can remove yourself by following the instructions on the home page, or you can send an email request to Ron Leve, [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net). YahooGroups has been upgraded with new capabilities — see <http://groups.yahoo.com/local/newemail.html> — and it is suggested that you receive messages in the "fully featured" mode to take advantage of them. If you take photos at Beth Chai events, this would be the place to display them.

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## My Beth Chai Epiphany

by Ron Leve

I confess, the title is a bit exaggerated, but I did want to get your attention for something I discovered and treasure very much ... and that is equally available to you as well.

Perhaps you grew up as I did with a belief that I continued to hold onto into adult life: that one only attends Bar Mitzvahs to which you were invited, or at least knew the young adult involved. So (I now realize with dismay) was my belief well into to my first year of Beth Chai membership. It was only in my second year that I discovered that all Beth Chai members are welcome at all Beth Chai Bar/Bat Mitzvahs. What a revelation and what a wonderful set of new experiences I was now able to share.

This may be old news to some of you, but I suspect that this may not be the case with a number of the newer members. Each Saturday morning that I spent attending a Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony was a unique experience, because each ceremony was designed by the family involved in consultation with Rabbi Art Blecher. This was not like the old days, where only the faces varied in a repetitive ceremony. In each case, the parents involved provided an often sweet insight into their children. And what stood out especially was the "speech" prepared by each participant. Again, this was not what you may have heard when you were growing up or at other institutions. These students reported on topics that they had studied for at least the past year, and in each an every case, provided insightful presentations at an adult level.

So, when you see announcements of the Mitzvah ceremonies in the newsletter or weekly email, mark that date on your calendar and give yourself a treat. While the ceremonies are usually in the latter part of the school year, you can take in that of Ben Resnik at 10:30 AM on Saturday, September 16 at Cedar Lane Unitarian Church.

# Beth Chai Book Sale Set for November 19



More to come in the next newsletter, but keep the date open for the Beth Chai Book Sale on November 19th — and of course, start thinking about what you will donate! We're working on a lot of great ideas to make this year's event easier to organize and better than ever for book lovers and DVD collectors. 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](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net)).

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## Unity Walk 2006

Can we make a date? A get-together that could leave you feeling fulfilled, though possibly a bit physically weary? How about joining those of us planning to participate in the Unity Walk of 2006? The Walk starts at Washington Hebrew Congregation, proceeds down Massachusetts Avenue, with a stop at the National Cathedral for a concert, includes a tour of the Islamic Mosque and a greeting from the Vatican, and ends with a speech by Mahatma Gandhi's grandson at the Gandhi Memorial in front of the Indian Embassy at the corner of Massachusetts and Q Street, NW.

The event takes place on **Sunday, September 10**, starting at **2 PM**. It is a totally non-political event, with signs barred. This year's walk, in addition to commemorating the anniversary of 9/11/2001, is dedicated to a collective effort to ending religiously motivated violence. Several Beth Chai'ers participated in last year's walk and experienced a profound feeling from walking with hundreds of people from all faiths and colors. Your children might also benefit from participation. If the Walk's mission statement below makes sense to you, contact Ron Leve, [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net), 202-496-9292, to make arrangements to walk together.

There are thousands of diverse societies confronted daily with religiously motivated violence, cultural misunderstanding, and ethnic based conflicts. Seldom are the moderate and peaceful voices able to articulate a positive common ground. The tragedy of the 9/11 terrorist attacks revealed the stark need to confront our differences and to foster greater understanding.

In an effort to further a culture of tolerance and understanding, the Unity Walk remains apolitical and non-ideological. The inspiration for the Unity Walk grew out of the need to bridge communities after 9/11. Through interfaith dialogue, spiritual sharing and walking together, we commemorate the tragedy of 9/11 and recognize those who have worked towards social justice, nonviolence and peace.

The Unity Walk creates ways for people of all faiths and those affiliated with no faith tradition to walk together; demonstrating a collective refusal to be divided on the basis of religion or by those seeking to divide.



The act of walking together shows that we care enough to know our neighbor as we seek to live peaceful lives in our global community. Our core mission is to inspire and mobilize people to move towards peace, understanding and compassion around the world.

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## New Webmaster

Beth Chai has been fortunate to enlist Jules Aronson as our new Webmaster. Please send any website updates to him at [jparonson@speakeasy.net](mailto:jparonson@speakeasy.net). And of course, many thanks to outgoing Webmaster Bill Adler, who has quietly served in this role for the past six years.

# Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Fri., Sept. 8 from 7-9 PM Sun., Sept. 10 from 1:30 - 3 PM	"A Fresh Perspective on American Judaism." A presentation of Beth Chai's modern, inclusive, and welcoming approach to Judaism, 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., Sept. 10 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.; approx. 11:15 AM meeting for all Family School participants	First day of Beth Chai Family School. Adult education topic: "Social Action on the Move," presented by Howie Feinstein, followed by meeting to share Sunday morning tasks.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Sept. 10 at 2 PM	DC Unity Walk (see article on page 7 for details)	Starting point: Washington Hebrew Congregation at Mass. Ave. & Macomb St., NW, DC.
Sun., Sept. 10 from 7 to 9 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Howie and Karen Feinstein in Bethesda. To RSVP and get directions please call 301-564-9482 or email <a href="mailto:khfeinstein@us.net">khfeinstein@us.net</a> .
Fri., Sept. 15 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)
Sat., Sept. 16 at 10:30 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Ben Resnik. All Beth Chai members are invited to attend the service.	Cedar Lane Unitarian, 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD
Sun., Sept. 17 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "Debate in Israel as Seen through Its Press." See article, page 5, for details.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sat., Sept. 23, 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)
Sun., Sept. 24	<b>No Sunday School</b> during Rosh Hashanah holiday	
Sun., Oct. 1 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Beth Chai Family School meets — Adult Ed topic TBD. October newsletter will have details.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Oct. 1 at 7:30 PM Mon., Oct. 2 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)



## Beth Chai Congregation

River Road U.C.  
6301 River Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

Answering service: 301-229-7400

Email: [info@bethchai.org](mailto:info@bethchai.org)

Website: [www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org)

**Address Correction Requested**



*Inside this issue:*  
First day of Sunday School  
is Sept. 10  
See page 4 for details