

Congregation Ahavas Achim

P.O. Box 334

Westfield, MA 01086

MAR / APR / MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER

<http://www.congregationahavasachim.org/>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sat. 3/9 @ 10am –Shabbat Morning Service via Google Meet

Sun. 3/17 - Adult Ed via Google Meet (details to follow)

Tue. 4/23 – Second Night Passover Seder (details to follow)

Fri. 5/17 @ 7:00pm – Shabbat Evening Service

Sat. 6/15 @ 10:00am – Shabbat Morning Service and pot luck picnic gathering (details to follow)

Sat. 6/29 @ 10:00am –Shabbat Morning Service and Molly King’s Bat Mitzvah

Please contact us at ahavasachiminquiry@gmail.com or leave a voicemail message at (413) 642-1797 if you want to say Kaddish or have any suggestions for us.

Board Meeting: Meetings are held via conference calls. Our next meeting is scheduled for April 10th. All are welcome to join. Please let us know if you are interested so that we may include you in our call by emailing ablumenthal@congregationahavasachim.org

Hebrew School:

Coordinator: Andy Blumenthal

(Please call him at (413) 569-8399 if you or another member of our community has expressed interest.)

Yahrzeit

With great sadness, we remember the following people on the Yahrzeit of their passing:

		<u>2024</u>
Shirley Goldstein	Adar II 1	3/11
Murray Sanders	Adar 9	3/19
Gail Wertel	Adar II 10	3/20
Irwin Rosenak	Adar II 12	3/22
Betty Grodzen	Adar 17	3/27
Doris Goldberg	Adar 18	3/28
Miriam Shepard	Adar 20	3/30
Harvey Roazen	Adar 22	4/1
Max Flax	Adar 27	4/6
Lauren Rosenthal	Adar 30	4/9
Howard Mackler	Nisan 9	4/17
Wally Goldstein	Nisan 11	4/19
Irene Bernstein	Nisan 14	4/22
Richard Lee Kaufman	Nisan 15	4/23
Blanche Schachter	Nisan 16	4/24
Phyllis Brody	Nisan 21	4/29
Pauline Tucker	Nisan 21	4/29
Hyman Schachter	Nisan 29	5/7
Janice Bowman	Iyar 5	5/13
Abraham Haselkorn	Iyar 14	5/22
Don Riddle	Iyar 14	5/22
Alda Haselkorn	Iyar 17	5/25
Esther Goldstein	Iyar 18	5/26

Congregation Ahavas Achim wishes to thank all its friends and members for their generous donations:

Fran Eisenberg - in honor of her grandchildren Delaney, Marley and Easton – General Fund

Bob and Judy Brown – General Fund

**Donations received as of 2/29/24*

Congregation Ahavas Achim wishes to thank all its friends and members for their generous donations (cont'd):

Marcia Kahn - General Fund

Wendell Choo – General Fund

Time, monetary and/or food donations made toward Christmas day dinner at the soup kitchen:

Sandy Mackler

Fran Eisenberg

Arthur Haselkorn

Bob and Judy Brown

Carol and Nate Rosenthal

Wendy and Bob Blondin

Lynne Goldberg, Bob and Simon Wool

Elsa Rosenak

Rissa Larsen

Nancy Rapisarda

Maureen Cain

Geri Johnson

Sheri Sochrin

Miriam and Lauren Steinberg

Chanukah in Westfield:

The city-wide Menorah Lighting Ceremony in Westfield that was scheduled to take place at 6:30pm on Sunday, December 10th at Park Square in downtown Westfield had a change in plans due to inclement weather. We were unable to light the menorah that was set up at Park Square, however, we moved the candle lighting to the First United Methodist Church where we were scheduled to go after the lighting. Thank you to Mayor Mike McCabe for attending and honoring the Jewish community of Westfield by having the large outdoor community menorah for the duration of the holiday. Thank you also to Rabbi Shahar Colt who led us in prayer and songs. She also welcomed the community to bring up their menorahs so they could all be lit in unison inside the social hall. Lastly, we'd like to thank the Jewish Endowment Foundation of the Western Mass Jewish Foundation for their support. The ceremony and celebration was very well attended by many members of our Jewish community, as well as other people from Westfield and other surrounding areas. After the lighting ceremony, everyone enjoyed delicious latkes while many played games of dreidel with wagers of gelt. A great time was had by all.

Christmas Day Soup Kitchen

(December 25, 2023):

We wish to thank all those who had a hand in providing a very special Christmas meal on Monday, December 25th at Our Community Table Soup Kitchen in Westfield. Our volunteers were very happy to prepare in-person and to-go meals to very appreciative diners at Our Community Table. We gave out approximately 50 meals. Everyone said the meal was really great and they appreciated all the extras that were not part of their usual Monday night meal. They also greatly appreciated their gifts, which included socks, gloves, hats and personal care items.

Our group of volunteers really stepped up to meet the needs of the community. Their generosity and willingness to share their time and talents brightened this Christmas for us all. Putting this together is truly a community effort. Bob and Judy once again cooked the meat to perfection and they even delivered it sliced with gravy.

Special thanks to Fran and Sandy for organizing this event and to everyone who provided their time, food, and monetary contributions to make this meal possible.

Message from Rabbi Colt:

(Spring 2024)

I write this on the eve of Rosh Chodesh Adar 1, the beginning of the Jewish month of Adar 1. This Jewish year is a leap year, and in the Jewish calendar, we don't just get an extra day every 4 years, we get an extra month- a second Adar- seven times every nineteen years (how to calculate this is beyond me!). The relevant part here is that Adar is the month of PURIM, but in a Jewish leap year, Purim is observed in Adar 2. So we have some time to get ready for the holiday, which this year will be on Sunday, March 24th.

Purim is generally understood as a joyous holiday, and its joy spreads out over the whole month. The Mishna (the foundational text of rabbinic Judaism) says, "Mishenichnas Adar, marbim b'simcha- from the time that Adar begins we increase in joy." Many people love Adar because of the joy of Purim, the fun, the associations of Purim parties, costumes, spiels, and treats. The story of Purim has powerful themes, including speaking up for one's self, self-presentation and disguise, twists and turns, fighting back against antisemitism. Purim has been a beloved holiday for centuries.

In my experience, while some people lean into the joy of Purim, many other people don't know what to do with this holiday as adults. A holiday with a prescribed emotion can feel forced, especially when one's own emotional life doesn't feel as joyful, or current events cast their shadows.

Regardless of how you are feeling as Purim approaches, I think there are ways to find meaning in this holiday. There are four mitzvot associated with Purim, and each one can be approached from a variety of emotional stand points. Here are some thoughts about each.

Read the Megillah: The book of Esther is the core text of Purim. It's a book in the Tanach, the Hebrew Bible, which never mentions God. Due to the exaggeration in the language, it's widely considered a work of fiction, perhaps even satire. The full text is available online. Read it on your own, or with a friend to discuss it. What do you think of it? What surprises you? I'd be so curious to hear your thoughts too!

Bring food gifts to friends: In the Megillah itself, Purim is described as a day of joy and gladness, for enjoying food. This is the origin of the practice of sending gift foods to family, friends and neighbors, to make sure that everyone has something to enjoy. The mitzvah technically includes

sending two different kinds of food and usually people send treats and hamantashen- but once a friend gave me a container of lentils and rice. Whether or not your recipient observes Purim, it's a sweet way to show care, and even build cultural understanding.

Eat a special meal: There's a joke about Jewish holidays they can be summarized: "they tried to kill us, we survived, let's eat!" It's apt for the Purim story, and especially at a time when many Jews are feeling more vulnerable to antisemitism, it's a powerful act to say we are here, unapologetically Jewish, and will continue to nourish ourselves, physically and spiritually, so that we continue to live and thrive.

Give gifts to the poor: It is always a good time to give tzedakah. It puts our lives in perspective as we realize that we can look outward and help others. We can give tzedakah to share our joy, and to honor our grief.

Wishing everyone some joy in both Adar 1 and Adar 2. As always, please reach out by email if you ever want to talk.

Rabbi Shahar Colt (she/her)

Congregation Ahavas Achim

Jewish Chaplain, Westfield State University

Happy Birthday!

Birthday wishes go out to the following:

Jason Blondin	March 2nd
Nate Rosenthal	March 14th
Fran Eisenberg	April 6th
Carol Rosenthal	April 7th
Nancy Rapisarda	April 15th
Bob Blondin	April 18th
Lynne Goldberg	April 21st

Happy Anniversary!

Anniversary wishes go out to the following:

Leslie & Rich O'Donnell May 26th

Hebrew Free Loan Association:

The Hebrew Free Loan Association of Greater Springfield offers interest-free loans to Jewish individuals and families whose needs are urgent and who may not qualify for personal loans from a bank or other financial institution. For more information, go to:

<https://hebrewfreeloanassociation.org/>