

CONGREGATION AHAVAS ACHIM

P.O. Box 334

Westfield, MA. 01086

2024-2025

You are cordially invited to renew your membership with, or to join Congregation Ahavas Achim for the first time. The communities we serve include Westfield, Southwick, and Northern Connecticut, as well as the Hilltown communities and the entire Pioneer Valley. Services are held at the Ferst Interfaith Center at Westfield State University or online via a livestream platform/format (during the winter months or if due to COVID related restrictions at the Interfaith.)

We welcome back Rabbi Shahar Colt as the congregation's spiritual leader for the upcoming year, with additional support during the High Holidays from a rabbinical student, Yitzi Gittelsohn, who will be leading our high holiday services this year. Rabbi Colt has many years of experience as a congregational rabbi and also as a religious educator. More about Rabbi Colt can be found on Congregation Ahavas Achim's Facebook page and at congregationahavasachim.org. Please also see her personal message on the following page.

Sabbath Services are held on a regular basis with dates listed in our quarterly newsletter. In addition, a variety of special events are planned each year beginning with High Holiday services, a community Break-the-Fast, a Chanukah party, Purim celebration, and a Passover Seder. We conduct additional adult and youth-oriented programming throughout the year, as well as helping out at the Westfield Soup Kitchen monthly and on Christmas Day. Information regarding 2024 High Holiday services will be announced in the upcoming quarterly newsletter.

We have strived to make Congregation Ahavas Achim as affordable as possible, so that those who are unable to afford membership elsewhere can join us. Our family dues are only \$650.00 per family and \$325.00 a year for an individual membership, with no additional charges for High Holy Day services. For those living over 50 miles away, we offer a Virtual Membership at a reduced rate.

Our congregation plays a major role in giving both adults and children a sense of Jewish identity, so important in this area. In addition, our congregation is small enough so that an individual's spiritual needs can be met in a warm, supportive and welcoming atmosphere. If you are looking for a friendly place to enjoy the holidays, say Yizkor for a departed one or want to explore your Jewish roots, please consider joining us. In the process, you will be helping maintain a Jewish presence in this area. We are happy to welcome those new to Judaism, members of interfaith marriages and their children. On request, our spiritual leader would be glad to talk to members about conversion, should that be a personal choice.

If you would like to join Congregation Ahavas Achim, please complete the enclosed 2024-2025 Membership Form and return it with your payment towards annual dues. We welcome any ideas for enhancing our programs and services. If you have ideas you would like to share, or ideas regarding topics for Adult or Family Education, please feel free to send a note to the board or call any of us. If you have any questions regarding Congregation Ahavas Achim or dues in particular, please feel free to call Sandy Mackler at (413) 262-4564 or Andrew Blumenthal at (413) 569-8399.

L'Shana Tova from the 2024-2025 Executive Board of

Congregation Ahavas Achim

Board Members

Wendy Blondin, Newsletter Editor	568-5347
Andrew Blumenthal, Co-President	569-8399
Fran Eisenberg	575-8465
Lynne Goldberg, Communication/Publicist	530-8453
Sandy Mackler, Co-President	262-4564
Nancy Rapisarda, Treasurer	562-9491

Message from the desk of Rabbi Shahar Colt:

Dear Ahavas Achim and Westfield Jewish Community,

It was a m'chayeh, a truly life-giving experience to be together at the end of June to celebrate Molly's bat mitzvah together. Experiencing a simcha in this community helped me appreciate more deeply the power of gathering together as Westfield's Jewish community. Though we may be small in numbers, we do powerful work to live real Jewish lives together - lives that radiate outwards and connect with so many others of all spiritual backgrounds.

I have been with this community for two and a half years now. As many of you know, I recently began a new full time position as the Assistant Director of Spiritual Life and Campus Rabbi at Amherst College. My family moved to Northampton- so much closer to Westfield than Boston! And so, in conversation with the CAA Board, we have decided that I will continue working with the community, though in a somewhat reduced capacity.

My Amherst schedule will conflict with CAA for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, so we have hired Yitzi Gittelsohn, a rabbinical student at Hebrew College, to lead these services. Yitzi has regularly impressed me with his thoughtfulness, his commitment to Jewish spirituality, his openness to learning, and his integration of music. I have already started working with him to help him prepare for leading these services, and we will introduce him more fully in the coming months.

Aside from high holidays, I will be leading one shabbat service a month, as well as our Chanukah candle lighting, Passover seder and Jewish learning programs during the year.

If you have any questions, or just want to talk, please feel free to be in touch.

I hope you had a wonderful summer, and I look forward to seeing the community again in September!

Rabbi Shahar

Congregation Ahavas Achim
2024-2025
P.O. Box 334
Westfield, Massachusetts 01086

Last Name _____ **Family Members** _____
Address _____
Home Phone _____ **Cell** _____ **E-mail address** _____

Annual Dues

Please remit annual dues for the 2024-2025 year, by **9/10/2024**. A payment plan may be set up in two or three installments however a \$10 fee will be due for each payment. Please indicate your choice of payment below: If you are more comfortable with a different payment option please contact Nancy Rapisarda, Treasurer. Please send your payment(s) to the address above.

- 1 payment Due by 9/10/24 **No payment plan fees**
 - 2 payments Due by 9/10/24 and 11/10/24 **Pmt #1 _____ +\$10 Pmt#2 _____ +\$10**
 - 3 payments Due by 9/10/24, 11/10/24 & 1/10/2025 **Pmt #1 _____ +\$10 Pmt#2 _____ +\$10 Pmt #3 _____ +\$10**
- (add \$10 fee to each payment for 2 or 3 payment plans) All payments should be completed by 1/10/2025**

Family (2 or more people) \$650 \$ _____
 Individual (1 person only) \$325 \$ _____

Virtual Membership (living 50+ miles from Westfield):

\$75 Individual _____
 \$250 Family _____

Hebrew School \$300 Additional Sibling \$175 \$ _____
 Sunday School \$100 \$ _____
 Additional Sibling \$50 \$ _____
 High Holiday Guests \$75 suggested donation \$ _____ (please indicate names)

Children 12 and under no fee (Includes all 5 HH services)
 (Includes all 5 HH services)

Payment Fees (If making more than one payment) \$ _____
Total Dues, Tuition, HH Tickets, Payment Fees \$ _____

Charitable Donations

It is a Jewish custom to pledge Tzedakah on occasions of happiness, in honor or memory of a family member, or before Yom Kippur. At Ahavas Achim, you may choose one of the following funds in the amount of your choice:

Torah Fund \$ _____
 Educational Development Fund \$ _____
 Prayer Book Fund (Provide Info. for Bookplate) \$ _____
 General Fund \$ _____
Total Donation \$ _____

Total Dues and Donation **Total Payment** \$ _____

Please complete so that we may include the following information in our Bi-Monthly newsletters. Names and birthdays of family members:

Wedding Anniversary: _____

Yahrzeit Dates you would like us to remind you of: (Hebrew Date if possible, or English day and year)

Please tell us something about you or your family that you would like to see in the newsletter i.e. accomplishments, births, trips, honors, etc. Feel free to do so throughout the year as well.
