

# Congregation Ahavas Achim

P.O. Box 334

Westfield, MA 01086

MAR / APR / MAY 2026 NEWSLETTER

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

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

*Services will be held at the Interfaith Center at WSU unless otherwise indicated:*

**Fri. 3/13 @ 7:00pm – Shabbat Evening Service**

**Wed. 4/8 – Passover Seder (details to follow)**

**Sun. 4/26 – Adult Ed (details to follow)**

**Sat. 5/9 @ 10:00am – Shabbat Morning Service**

**Fri. 5/22 @ 7:00pm – Shabbat Evening Service**

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

*Please contact us at [ahavasachinquiry@gmail.com](mailto:ahavasachinquiry@gmail.com) or leave a voicemail message at (413) 282-8429 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 15th. 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](mailto: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>2026</u>
Irwin Rosenak	Adar 12	3/3
Gabrielle Anderson	Adar 14	3/5
Betty Grodzen	Adar 17	3/8
Doris Goldberg	Adar 18	3/9
Miriam Shepard	Adar 20	3/11
Harvey Roazen	Adar 22	3/13
Max Flax	Adar 27	3/16
Lauren Rosenthal	Adar 30	3/18
Howard Mackler	Nisan 9	3/27
Wally Goldstein	Nisan 11	3/29
Irene Bernstein	Nisan 14	4/1
Richard Lee Kaufman	Nisan 15	4/2
Blanche Schachter	Nisan 16	4/3
Phyllis Brody	Nisan 21	4/8
Pauline Tucker	Nisan 21	4/8
Hyman Schachter	Nisan 29	4/16
Janice Bowman	Iyar 5	4/22
Abraham Haselkorn	Iyar 14	5/1
Don Riddle	Iyar 14	5/1
Alda Haselkorn	Iyar 17	5/4
Esther Goldstein	Iyar 18	5/5
Stanley Lewin	Iyar 28	5/15
Leah Ruth Chase	Sivan 5	5/21
Alfred Levy	Sivan 7	5/23
Joseph Goodman	Sivan 13	5/29
Mary Garber	Sivan 15	5/31
Maurice Goldstein	Sivan 15	5/31
Emily Wright	Sivan 17	6/2
Les Gubkin	Sivan 18	6/3
Joy B. Dawson	Sivan 19	6/4

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

Alex Stessel – General Fund

Jeffrey Stoloff – General Fund – in honor of CAA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Fran Eisenberg – General Fund - in loving memory of her mother Gail on the 4th anniversary of her passing

Fran Eisenberg – General Fund - in honor of Lynne Goldberg and Bob Wool for harvesting the best honey from their apiary

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

Fran Eisenberg & Arthur Haselkorn  
Sandy Mackler  
Susan Mackler  
Lynne Goldberg  
Carol & Nate Rosenthal  
Maureen Cain  
Rissa Larsen  
Geri Johnson  
Bob & Judy Brown  
Wendy & Bob Blondin  
Barbara & Michael Davenport

*\*Donations received as of 2/28/26*

Christmas Day Soup Kitchen

(December 25, 2025):

We wish to thank all those who had a hand in providing a very special Christmas meal on Thursday, 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 Thursday 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. We also provided a hearty beef stew meal just one week later on New Year's Day.

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.

Chanukah in Westfield:

The city-wide Menorah Lighting Ceremony in Westfield took place at 5:30pm on Sunday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at Elm Street Plaza in downtown Westfield. Thank you to Mayor Mike McCabe for having the outdoor Menorah, honoring the wonderful Jewish community of Westfield and hosting the Community Menorah Lighting. Thank you also to Rabbi Shahar Colt who led us in prayer and songs. 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 was invited back to the First United Methodist Church for delicious latkes while many played games of dreidel with wagers of gelt. A great time was had by all.

The highlight of the evening was a presentation by Dr Robert Brown,

Professor Emeritis, WSU. Fifty years ago, in 1975 our congregation was planned at his and his wife Judy's kitchen table when a group of people got together to reestablish a synagogue and a Jewish presence here in Westfield after years of having no place to meet, pray and teach their children. He went back to the turn of the last century with details about influential past members and various meeting locations until the present. We received tremendous feedback from both members and non-members, and truly appreciate Bob's willingness to be part of our celebration.

### Happy Birthday!

Birthday wishes go out to the following:

Jason Blondin	March 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Nate Rosenthal	March 14 <sup>th</sup>
Fran Eisenberg	April 6 <sup>th</sup>
Carol Rosenthal	April 7 <sup>th</sup>
Nancy Rapisarda	April 15 <sup>th</sup>
Bob Blondin	April 18 <sup>th</sup>
Lynne Goldberg	April 21 <sup>st</sup>
Dave Wright	June 4 <sup>th</sup>

### Happy Anniversary!

Anniversary wishes go out to the following:

Leslie & Rich O'Donnell    May 26<sup>th</sup>

### 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/>

### Passover Wine Sale at the JCC:

Taste a wide variety of exquisite kosher wine, paired with delicious appetizers that will enhance your Passover experience. Led by representatives from Gordon's Fine Wines & Liquors, you'll learn about each wine and have the opportunity to custom order your favorites. Join us for this festive tasting, featuring live music and a holiday tablescape demo!

With Cheryl Blonder Catering, pianist Donalynn Gross, and food and lifestyle personality Jessie-Sierra Ross.

Delivery will be available in time for the holidays. An additional, informal tasting will take place on Thursday afternoon, March 5, in the JCC lobby. Stock up before the holiday!

### Important 2026 Passover Wine Sale Dates:

Wednesday, March 4 | 5:30 - 7:30 PM  
Seder Sips! Wine Tasting, featuring representatives from Gordon's Fine Wines & Liquors

Thursday, March 5 | 4:30 - 6:00 PM  
Informal tastings and sales in the JCC Lobby

[Passover Wine Tasting & Sale](#)

## **Message from Rabbi Colt:**

Dear Ahavas Achim community,

At the Chanukah party this past December we had the honor of hearing from Robert Brown about the Jewish history of Westfield and the history of Ahavas Achim in particular. One aspect of Ahavas Achim's history struck me as particularly unique: the founding of a congregation in the 1970s by predominantly interfaith families and the support the group received from a local Orthodox rabbi.

Often in the telling of Jewish communal history the presence of interfaith families is left out entirely. But mixed families, even when family ties haven't been honored or acknowledged, have been around ever since the Israelites left slavery in Egypt, when they were described as an "erev rav," a mixed multitude. There's a Midrash that even Pharaoh's daughter joined them on the way out, after all, she had rescued Moshe as a baby and loved him as a parent, despite his Israelite heritage and her being an Egyptian princess.

In April we will come together for our community Seder, which in my experience with this community has been an open and welcoming Seder. It is a space for our Jewish community members to come together to celebrate the holiday, and it is a space where friends from the community and from other faith traditions have joined us. It is a place where the presence of multi-heritage families is normal, and I am excited to continue this beautiful community Seder tradition this year.

I write this as I see the Jewish community across the country struggle with how to respond to antisemitism, and I am seeing two distinct approaches emerge. For some, antisemitism reinforces a sense that Jews are on our own. That we can't rely on others, and in fact leads to reinvestment in spaces that are predominantly or exclusively Jewish. An example of this is the growing sense in some parts of the Jewish world that Jewish college students can only be safe on college campuses with a big enough Jewish population; for some that means going to Israel for college, and certainly for many it means writing off small liberal arts colleges in the Northeast, which have been described as hotbeds of antisemitism. (Despite some incidents, it was not my experience that Jewish students suffered from bias continuously, or more than other minority groups.)

For others, there is a sense that we are and will always be a minority, so we have to find common ground with our neighbors. This approach has historically been the mode of much of the American Jewish community. As a minority we have benefited from the rights and freedoms of a democracy that has a legal tradition honoring freedom of religion. Our freedom and safety as Jews stemmed from the aspiration of equality for all peoples. This perspective required and requires taking seriously a mutual investment in the safety of all peoples, as demonstrated by the volume of Jews who participate(d) in social movements for equality.

I resonate with both of these impulses. Being a minority, especially a minority that is often misunderstood, and vilified in some contexts, makes one want to seek out spaces where one won't encounter such bias or worse. For this reason, investing in strong, supportive Jewish community spaces is essential. Such spaces can provide a haven, and they can fortify us through celebrations that strengthen Jewish self-respect as well as learning opportunities that better help us understand our heritage and our place in the world.

At the same time, if we only stay in these havens, we risk losing track of what is happening in the broader world. We risk losing the relationships of neighbors, colleagues, business partners, friends and family that make life in our deeply interconnected world possible and nourishing. If Jews turn our backs on the experiences and challenges of other groups, we are leaning into the very dynamics that lead others to turn their backs to us. By contrast, we all become stronger when we invest in working together, know each other better, and can stand up for each other.

**As we head into the Passover season, the celebration of freedom, let us honor the wisdom in both these instincts. Let us gather with family and friends to hold or attend Seder(s) that inspire and ground us, while cultivating our connections to Jewish traditions, heritage and values. And may the Seder practice of moving from slavery and narrowness to freedom and expansiveness, honored with people from a variety of backgrounds and faith traditions, guide us to reinvest in the work of fighting for the freedom and dignity of all people in our communities.**

**I look forward to seeing you on April 8th!**

**Rabbi Shahar**