

Shmoozeletter

Temple Or Olam



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Community Seder, April 19
- sustaining the congregation
- volunteers for Passover event needed
- Tikkun Olam project May 21
- Annual Meeting June 12
- Ginger Jensen appointed Director of Religious Services

Community Seder Apr. 19

OUT FROM THE NARROW PLACES

Every year, we celebrate the great story of the Exodus, the making of a nation and a people. Our ancestors, we explain, escaped Mitzrayim, the Narrow Place, and fled to freedom. There they learned through much trial and many errors that however hard it was to become a people, the effort to understand freedom would be something worth reliving and retelling ever year.

Passover with a community seder on April 19th. We will sing songs of freedom and celebration, enjoy skits and songs, and dance to the music of liberation. If you would like to join us, please send an inquiry to info@or-olam.org and we'll send you the details!

Community Seder
April 19

6:00 - 9:00 p.m.

McGill Baptist Church,
5300 Poplar Tent Road
Concord

Temple Or Olam will celebrate

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Macha Chmakoff, 'The Exodus'



MILEV HAPARDES

FROM THE HEART OF THE ORCHARD

The Hebrew word for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, means 'narrow space.' In fact, we are living in narrow spaces – each and every one of us.

We live in a country that confines and restricts access to prosperity; some 400 families command wealth equal to that of 150 million Americans. Tax rates have fallen precipitously for the wealthiest among us. We are losing our middle class.

We have adopted a consumer mentality that confines us. We focus on what we want to have. We work at securing our physical comfort. We think about our needs – often, to the exclusion of all else.

Americans are living in narrow spaces.

One day, in a sudden crisis, we learn (again) that what we really need is family, friends, and community. The mitzvah of making

a minyan or donating in a loved one's memory is really about supporting and strengthening the community we need, a community we can turn to in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health.

Nationwide, the leaders of all kinds of Jewish organization have expressed concern about the way our generation responds when asked for help and support. Often, the response is negative – sometimes even re-



Rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede

SUSTAINING A JEWISH CONGREGATION

sentful. The negativity Jewish organizations are experiencing is not explained by a difficult economy – the trend to give less or not at all long precedes the present economic downturn.

When I speak to the oldest members of our congregation, they worry about such trends. They tell me that in their day, folks paid membership dues and gave

donations to Jewish organizations because they believed that Jewish community was worth their support.

Members cared about sustaining a Jewish congregation; they valued having a Jewish presence and a Jewish home for everyone, not just for themselves. They did not believe they were 'buying' a service. They

believed they were doing their part to sustain a tradition, a history, a culture, a people that deserved their support and love.

I am grateful that our congregation – and other Jewish institutions – serve to keep the Jewish narrative living, breathing, and growing. May we do what we can to support that work as our fathers and mothers did

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MAINTAINING A JEWISH PRESENCE

before us. May we be motivated not by the narrow 'me,' but the expansive 'we' and the inviting 'you.'

This Passover, may we free ourselves from restrictions. May we sing our gratitude for that freedom, and may we do

all we can to nurture our capacity for generosity to our congregation and community, to the Jewish home we are committed to maintaining – for each other and for the future.

Rabbi Barbara



Seth Holtzman

LETTER FROM THE BOARD – APRIL 2011

PURIM

Many thanks to the Social Team for setting up for Purim! It was truly a fun-filled festival with a Purim-related Dr. Seuss performance, jokes from the VanArsdale Family Jesters, singing by our own Rabbi and Ralf, as well as the Mamas Without the Papas, and a hot debate about the best Jewish food – hamentashen, latkes or mandel brot.

PASSOVER

Passover will soon be here. Our community seder will be held on Tuesday evening, April 19, beginning at 6pm. It will be catered this year although we'll still need volunteers to help. An e-vite will be sent shortly. RSVP's *and* payment will be needed one week in advance for

an accurate count for the caterer. We cannot accept late reservations.

There will be an adult menu consisting of chicken soup and matzoh balls, Mediterranean chicken with side dishes and dessert, and a children's menu (age 5 and under) of hot dogs, sides, and dessert.

TIKKUN OLAM

The Tikkun Olam Team has an event planned where people older than 12 can help at Second Harvest Food Bank in Charlotte on Saturday morning, May 21. Allie & Stephen Billings live nearby and have arranged babysitting services for children 12 and under at their house. Please let Allie know if you require babysit-

ting. We are planning programs where everyone can help!

TEMPLE OR OLAM

T-SHIRTS

The Tikkun Olam Team is working on designing and ordering Temple Or Olam t-shirts that we can wear to Tikkun Olam projects and other events to identify our group.

SAVE THE DATE:

ANNUAL MEETING

Spring also means that our congregational meeting can't be far behind. It is planned for Sunday, June 12 at McGill Baptist Church. Save the date and come join us to hear about our plans for the coming year, vote on several board positions, and vote on our budget.

THANK YOU

Thank you to the VanArsdale family for donating plush Torahs and dreydels for Hanukkah.



Seth Holtzman

Our Community Seder will be held on April 19.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF
RELIGIOUS SERVICES

I recently had the opportunity to spend two evenings talking about Judaism to an adult education class at St. James Lutheran Church. Trying to compress 3,800 years of Jewish history, theology, culture, and jokes into two hours wasn't easy, and, since everyone there was interested in learning about us, devoting time to emphasizing the tragedies in our history seemed unnecessarily strident. A comment I made at the end of that part of the discussion seemed to startle people, though.

'What all the murderous dictators didn't realize,' I said, 'was that the easiest way to get rid of us is to be nice to us.'

Mitzrayim/Egypt is far from the only narrow place Jews have ever lived.

The word *ghetto* originated in Venice, where it was applied to the quarter where Jews were required to live. Venice was a narrow place five hundred years ago but, in some ways, it was easier to be Jewish there. Asking your employer for the first or last two days of a holiday off wasn't an issue when all the businesses in the ghetto were closed for the Jewish holidays.

Life in the *shtetlach* of Eastern Europe was narrow, but the newly bereaved knew that a minyan would always be avail-

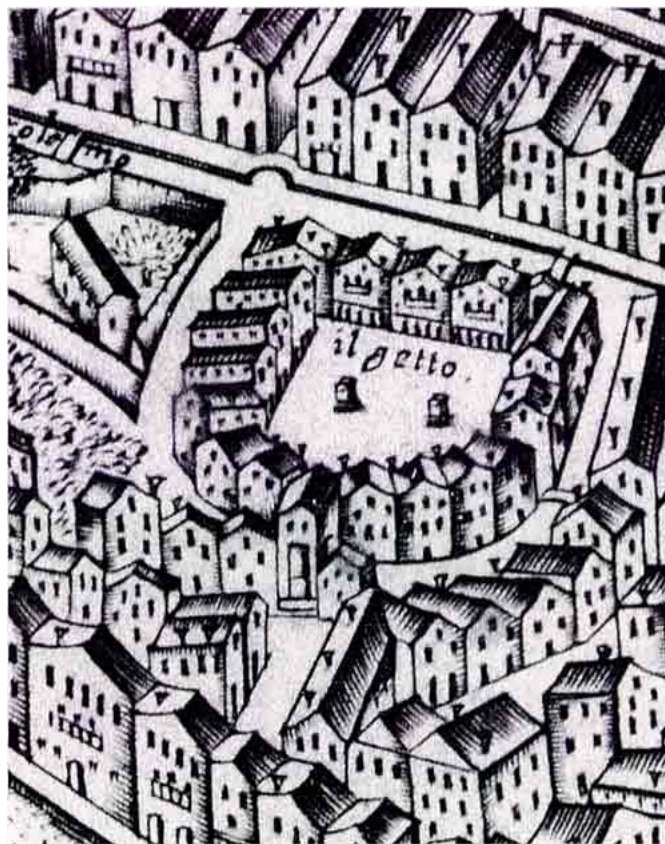
able to enable the reciting of Kaddish.

American Jews today have the privilege of living in the most culturally spacious place that Jews in the Diaspora have ever enjoyed. We have thrived in the liberty afforded us here, yet that very freedom has too often given us room to drift away from the community and the traditions that sustained earlier generations.

Perhaps as we celebrate Pesach this year, we can take some time to consider how we can enjoy the blessings of this wide, wonderful place, while still being careful to hold Judaism close.

Ginger Jensen

We have thrived in the liberty afforded us here, yet that very freedom has too often given us room to drift away from the community and the traditions that sustained earlier generations.



Y A H R Z E I T

04-15 Abraham Shapiro, father of Harriet Commike



www.or-olam.org

04-19 Community Seder

BIRTHDAYS

04-12 Jody Mace

04-16 Robbin Smith

04-20 Marilyn Atlas

04-21 Jamie Lynn Jordan

04-26 Jason Gordon

04-28 Karin Cutler

C O N T A C T I N F O R M A T I O N

Dr. Barbara Thiede: rabbi.thiede@or-olam.org

Robbin Smith, president: info@or-olam.org

Religious school: religious-school@or-olam.org

Youth group: youth@or-olam.org

Schmoozeletter: editor@or-olam.org

Webmaster: webmaster@or-olam.org

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1135
Concord, NC 28026-1135

Phone: 704-720-7577

T H E B O A R D

President: Robbin Smith
Vice President: Judah Malin
Director of Religious Services: Ginger Jensen
Treasurer: Arthur Kingberg
Membership Director: Jill Partridge

