

**Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley**  
**Virtual Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday January 21st, 2021 7:00pm**

**In attendance:** Andy Goldberg, Barbara Miller, Cynthia Meyersburg , Debbie Blicher, Debbie Glass, Jake Steinmann, Jerry Kazin, Jesse Wertheimer, Jim Billings, Jocylyn Bailin, Judy Goldberg, Lizza Sandoe, Marla Lewitus, Michelle Fineblum, Mike Joachim, Neil Frieband, Sabina Pestka, Steve Probst, Steve Breit, Beth Schine, Rabbi Breindel, Scott Newman, Shoni Aronovich

**Welcome:** Jim Billings

It's winter – good thing we don't need to drive anywhere!

**Hebrew With Janet:** A.V.D. Let My People Pray

To work and to worship have the same root! So do servant/slave and fact.

**December meeting minutes:** Jocylyn Bailin

Minutes approved unanimously

**Rabbi's Report:** Rabbi Breindel

Full report attached; these are extra notes

\*Hannukah happened! All went well. Due to Covid-19 we could not do the same kind of innovative in-person programming that we unveiled last year. Nonetheless the hanukkah lighting, the MetroWest program, and the drive-in school program were all successful.

\*Lydia Hughes' funeral. Although technically Lydia was not a member of Beth El anymore, it felt right to do her funeral. She hadn't ever belonged anywhere else and Beth El was in her heart and soul. The rabbi and Jim consulted together about how to proceed and made the decision to do the funeral; in the future they will reach out/report back to the Board if a similar circumstance arises.

\*Bea Pestka's Bat Mitzvah was a joyous experience!

\*Post-inauguration gathering. This was Lorel's inspiration, and she and the rabbi gave up their day off to plan it together. It was important that it be non-partisan and held in the Jewish context of supporting our leaders.

\*The clergy interfaith group is looking to do more programming together. The Sudbury anti-racism group will be partnering with the interfaith clergy to create programs.

\*RJB has made a public statement that he personally and Beth El together are a community actively trying to be anti-racist. RJB feels strongly that we have a moral imperative to combat racism and is willing to put it out there. The Rabbi promises to come to the Board when he will be participating in and/or planning public events but is committed to action on this issue.

\*RJB has been accepted to the CLI (Clergy Leadership Incubator) program led by Sid Schwarz. This is a great honor and an even greater opportunity to be out there in the forefront of clergy innovation.

### **Temple Administrator's Report:** Beth Schine

\*Membership numbers are similar to previous months. One new family has joined; two have tendered resignations but one may reconsider. We are reaching out to those who resigned a while ago to see if they might be interested in coming back.

\*The office has been busy supporting all the extra programming that is taking place in addition to the regular ongoing classes

\*Our contract with Chaverware (congregational database) is expiring; we are exploring our options and meeting with vendors.

### **Covid-19 Committee Update:** Craig Ross and Laurie Margolies

The other committee members are Cynthia Myersberg, David Krieger, and Judy Goldberg, along with Jim Billings and Beth Schine

The role of the committee is to review the science, local and national data, and best practices and make recommendations to the Board and Clergy. They regularly receive requests from clergy, staff, and congregants looking for advice and approval for events. They do their best to balance science, data, and compassion. The committee reviews the data every 3-4 weeks and makes adjustments based on the findings. Loving message from the Covid-19 task force: Stay Home. One third of the deaths are yet to come. These next few months will be the hardest to bear. We can do it.

### **Lorel L'hitra'ot Committee Update:** Steve Breit

All events are being planned on the assumption that they will need to be remote. Will adapt as necessary

The committee is hoping that by Spring – mid-April or so- we will be able to set up some sort of tent in the garden or use the sukkah. This would provide a place for Lorel to meet 1:1 (or 1:family unit) with congregants in an appropriately socially-distanced way – much as was done by both clergy in the fall. The

committee has investigated the cost of a tent; it looks to be in the vicinity of \$400-\$600. Neil told them to send a request to the allocations committee.

**Vision Alignment Committee Update:** Fern Chertok, Jocylyn Bailin, Rabbi Breindel

The VAC is working to develop a vision statement that reflects the congregation as it is and our aspirations for the future. Who are we? Who do we want to be? This vision statement will then serve as a basis for strategic planning and decision making. The VAC and the LIT are working together. The VAC hopes to be in the field with the community by late February and plans to have a report to the Board by early May. We plan to provide monthly updates to the Beth El community. Suggestion was made that Jim update the congregation monthly on the activities of the VAC, the LIT, and the L'hitra'ot committee.

**Executive Session invoked 8:22pm**

Meeting adjourned 9:11pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jocylyn Bailin

Clerk, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley

## Rabbi's Report Dec-Jan

### Ritual

- **Community Chanukah initiative** – lovely experience, especially the full community gathering at which I MC'ed.
  - Will be working with Lorel on community Shavuot planning
- **Joined with Scott** for parking-lot Chanukah candle-lighting for the school.
- **Officiated at funeral for Lydia Hughes.** Jim and I reflected deeply together; decided to treat as a member event.
- Celebrated **bat mitzvah ceremony for Bea Pestka** and her family!
- Lorel and I offered a **post-inauguration ceremony of blessing** last night.

### Lifecycle/Pastoral

- **Pastoral support** remains a major need (none directly connected to COVID).

### Community outreach/events

- **Sudbury interfaith MLK** event – 115 participants! A LOT of work. Thanks to Lisa, Nicci and Rachel G. Conversation with interfaith group about future programs.
- **Chanukah for tots at Goodnow Library** was cancelled – we're trying for Passover.
- Will present for the **Islamic Center of Boston (Wayland)** for their book group on Sunday, 2/7 on a Jewish perspective on "forgiveness" with Fr. Carl Chudy and Shaheen Akhtar.

### Programming and education

- **Creating a Tu Bi-Shevat** self-guided experience (source-sheet only, following COVID Committee recommendations) for next week.
- Helping to craft and plan to participate in both **J-LOFT (high school) and middle school Tu Bi-Shevat** programs.

### Administrative

- **Gabba'im** will offer monthly divrei Torah through the spring: share more voices!
- **Visioning team** held first meeting; working closely with Jim and LIT.
- **Was accepted to Clergy Leadership Incubator (CLI) cohort!**
- Working closely with Jim, leadership and several committees on Lorel transition.

### Personal

- Will take **vacation time** to correspond to my children's February break (2/14-18). Will not affect Shabbat.

## Tikkun Olam update – January 2021

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, our fellow congregants are rising to the occasion to perform acts of Tikkun Olam – to repair the world – now more than ever. Please email [tikkunolam@bethelsudbury.org](mailto:tikkunolam@bethelsudbury.org) if I've missed anything or if you'd like more information.

- **Green Team:** The Green Team is helping members reduce our collective carbon emissions. With the New Year comes new climate learning and action opportunities.

On February 2nd, the Green Team hosts a webinar on composting with Black Earth Compost.

February 17th will see a Green Team webinar on Greening Your Home Heating & Cooling for Your Home.

If you've not already done so, you can create your own MassEnergize account and list your household climate actions. Click here to sign up: <https://community.massenergize.org/JCAN>

Jerry Kazin, Beth El's VP/Tsibur, advises that the temple attic insulation and air infiltration project is almost done. This will reduce our energy operating costs and improve comfort at no cost to the Congregation.

Want to attend a webinar? Have questions on possible actions you can take to reduce your energy use and carbon footprint? Contact John Harper, [jpharper47@gmail.com](mailto:jpharper47@gmail.com).

- **Anti-Racism Working Group:** The Antiracism Working Group presented the video "Breaking the Antisemitism Cycle Through Solidarity" with Dove Kent, followed by a discussion of the relationship between racism and antisemitism.

Beth El co-sponsored an interfaith Martin Luther King Day event and will co-sponsor other upcoming events, including a facilitated film discussion at Lincoln-Sudbury High School titled "I'm Not a Racist, Am I?"

The next antiracism book group meeting is on January 24. Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates will be discussed.

Working Group leadership has been meeting with other congregations to explore models of congregational antiracism work. Contacts: Judy Goldberg and Karen Blumenfeld

- **Sanctuary Committee:** We continue work in multiple areas:

We are trying to take stock of exactly where we are financially with respect to the Ayalas. They are more self-sufficient now than they were even a few months ago, but they still do need support in various areas. In conjunction with HIAS, we will be hosting a "Refugee Shabbat" at Beth El. We are trying to work out the logistics of it as we speak. Many more details to come. We would very much like to have it at the end of Pesach.

We organized a celebratory Stand-Out in Sudbury Center on the morning of January 20, Inauguration Day, to mark this moment before moving forward with more work to be done.

For more information on the Ayala family, contact Judy Katz ([judy16k@gmail.com](mailto:judy16k@gmail.com)) or Judy Sletzinger ([jsletzinger@gmail.com](mailto:jsletzinger@gmail.com)).

For details on legislative action, contact Kath Bean ([kathleencbean@gmail.com](mailto:kathleencbean@gmail.com)).

For info on Friday afternoon stand-outs or other Sanctuary Committee activities, contact Carl Offner ([carl.offner@comcast.net](mailto:carl.offner@comcast.net)).

• **Support for Beth El members:** Winter is upon us and Covid-19 has us firmly in its grasp. Some of us are sheltering in place with family, trying to be parents and teachers and athletic directors as well as work, while others are alone in our homes with nobody to talk to and no one to give us a hug. No matter what your situation is, these are trying and stressful times for everyone. This is a time for our community to step up and take care of one another.

There are currently two community support initiatives underway:

1. **Phone Buddies** make weekly or bi-monthly calls to other congregants. Anyone can do this, no matter how young or old (or in-between) you are! If you would like to make calls, let us know. If you would like to receive calls and/or would like to refer someone else to be a recipient of calls, let us know that too. Please contact Carol Sheingold at 617-943-3977 or [csheingold@gmail.com](mailto:csheingold@gmail.com).

2. **Soup Group!** Formerly called the Share Warmth and Love Brigade, this group of congregants make and deliver soup to other community members. To date we have made multiple soup deliveries to four recipients, and a fifth recipient will be getting soup starting this weekend! The soups have received rave reviews, nourishing both body and soul. As a reminder, soup can be delivered for serious needs like illness or being homebound, soup can also be sent to someone feeling lonely, cold, or just having a tough week. We can deliver even just because you feel like having a warm soupy hug! If you would like to volunteer to make soup and have not yet done so, please let us know! If you would like to request soup or nominate someone else to receive soup don't hesitate to reach out! Please contact Jocelyn Bailin at [pi\\_joy@yahoo.com](mailto:pi_joy@yahoo.com).

• **Help for Congregants Who Need Food Assistance:** If there are any congregants who could use some food assistance, they should contact Deborah Oppenheimer directly at [deb\\_oppenheimer@alumni.pomona.edu](mailto:deb_oppenheimer@alumni.pomona.edu); all information will be kept confidential.

If any need assistance getting pantry (or other) groceries delivered to them, they should contact Neighborhood Brigade (with whom Deborah has partnered). If they live in Lincoln or Sudbury they should contact Sudbury Neighborhood Brigade about home deliveries, at Sudbury MA Neighbor Brigade .

• **Tzedek Scholarship Fund:** The Tzedek Scholarship Fund is truly grateful to all the generous donors at Beth El who continue to support our work. We're continuing to support our three Framingham State scholars, who are managing well adapting to the new realities of education in the time of Corona. Below are short statements from two of our Tzedek scholars, both of whom will soon graduate Framingham State University. My goal for this Spring semester is to earn Deans List as I conclude my undergraduate education. Learning during the pandemic has been challenging but I have continued to succeed and made President's and Dean's list for the Fall semester. At this time, I'm applying for Framingham State University HR graduate program. Thank you for your support. Sincerely, Sashell Thebaud

My goals when graduating is to start an after-school program to help children have a vision and mission for their life at an early age, by teaching real life technique. Children will explore all jobs, and how life works. I want to thank those who had contributed to helping someone like me be able to graduate May 2021. It has been a dream of mine to attend college and this dream wouldn't be possible if it wasn't for people like you. Thank you for your kindness. May God bless you and your future. ---Rayanne Silva

• **Criminal Justice Reform:** Criminal Justice Reform, in conjunction with the Anti-Racism Interest group, has begun work on a project to publicize and, if possible, aid in the establishment of more Restorative Justice Circles. There is a group in Concord which is already doing this but has not been able to connect to poorer communities. We are reaching out to the former for advice, which communities are already involved, etc. We are considering Framingham, Hudson, Maynard and Marlborough. For more info, contact Elaine Barnartt-Goldstein at [ebarnarttgoldstein@gmail.com](mailto:ebarnarttgoldstein@gmail.com).

• **Tzedaka Hevra:** The Tzedaka Hevra has had a very busy and productive year, giving away roughly \$30,000. 60% went to 3 organizations and the remaining 40% to 27 other organizations. We also made an emergency Covid donation of \$1000 that we split between Yad Chesed and Rabbi Breindel's discretionary fund. We heard from speakers representing organizations that we donate to, or that we may donate to. The Hevra meets regularly and is open to any Beth El member. To learn more, contact Ira Silver:

[isilver@framingham.edu](mailto:isilver@framingham.edu)

• **MetroWest Free Medical Program:** The MWFMP is “seeing” patients remotely through a combination of video calls, phone conversations, and text messaging. We’re limited right now to patients we’ve seen before and hope to extend our services to new patients at in the future when we have more infrastructure in place to support telemedicine. We’ve received some emergency grants from funders that are helping to make the transition to telemedicine. We anticipate operating this way for the foreseeable future, into 2021. Visit their website to learn more and get involved.

• **Blood Drive:** Due to COVID, the blood drive has been postponed.

• **Kiddush donation opportunities:** In lieu of hosting Kiddush at the temple, consider joining a Beth El Kiddush group, which plans to donate funds to food pantries, including Sudbury Food Pantry, Greater Boston Food Bank and Feeding America.

• **Covid-19 volunteer opportunities:** Our community rises to the current Covid-19 challenge! Many Tikkun Olam efforts are already underway in support of Beth El members and the broader community. More opportunities arrive in our inboxes every day. The CJP, JCRC, Jewish Family & Children's Service, and others offer many opportunities. If you’re able to help, please take a look at their websites: <https://www.jfcsboston.org/About/COVID-19-Update> <https://www.jcrcboston.org/covid-19/> <https://www.cjp.org/get-involved>

• **COVID-19 Support Services From CJP:** If the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has affected someone you know financially, the CJP WarmLine (1-800-CJP-9500) may be able to assist. With one phone call or by filling out a simple online form, trained Warmline counselors can begin to help navigate available services across the Jewish community. JewishBoston.com also has additional information about community resources during the COVID-19 crisis.

CJP has launched the CJP Coronavirus Emergency Fund in order to extend greater support to numerous Jewish social service agencies providing critical services during this time. 100% of the money raised will help community members who are facing hardship as a result of this pandemic.

Anyone feeling overwhelmed with sadness, anxiety or stress, or who wants to harm themselves or others, can access the mental health, emotional support and suicide prevention program Call2Talk by dialing 2-1-1, calling 508-532-2255 or by texting C2T to 741741.

Thanks to everyone for your holy work! If I’ve missed anyone’s Tikkun Olam efforts at Beth El, please let me know. We’d like to share the news with the community! If something here interests you, and you don’t see contact information, let me know and I’m happy to connect you.

L’shalom, Michelle Fineblum,  
VP, Tikkun Olam