

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation

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visit us at <http://www.bnaisholom.albany.ny.us>

FEBRUARY 2016

SHEVAT/ADAR I 5776

JOIN US FOR THESE SERVICES AND STUDY SESSIONS

Friday, February 5	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE - T'fillat Talmidim	6:00 PM
	POTLUCK DINNER	7:00 PM
Saturday, February 6	PSALMS EXTENDED STUDY: <i>Mishpatim</i> Ex 21.1-24.18	9:30 AM
	Ice Cream for Breakfast	
Friday, February 12	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE	8:00 PM
Saturday, February 13	TORAH STUDY: <i>Terumah</i> Ex 25.1-27.19	9:30 AM
Friday, February 19	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE	8:00 PM
Saturday, February 20	TORAH STUDY: <i>Tetsavveh</i> Ex 27.20-30.10	9:30 AM
Friday, February 26	EREV SHABBAT SERVICE	8:00 PM
	YOBS Creative Service	
Saturday, February 27	TORAH STUDY: <i>Ki Tissa'</i> Ex 30.11-34.35	9:30 AM
Friday, March 4	KABBALAT SHABBAT SERVICE	
	Banjo Shabbat	6:00 PM
	SHABBAT DINNER	7:00 PM
Saturday, March 5	PSALMS EXTENDED STUDY: <i>Va-yakhel</i> Ex 35.1-38.20	9:30 AM



Friday Night Potluck February 5, 2016 6 p.m. Service * 7 p.m. Potluck

RSVP: Julie Friedman 439-8106 jbfriedman8@gmail.com

Sponsored by the B'nai Sholom Religious School Committee

B'nai Sholom Reform Congregation, a Reform Jewish synagogue, is a community that fosters individual, family and congregational spirituality by engaging in worship and prayer, promoting learning on all levels, supporting each others' needs, bettering our community and our world, and forging connections with worldwide Jewry.

We take pride in being warm, welcoming, informal, progressive, open-minded, diverse, and participatory.

We strive to create a vibrant Jewish present, linking our ancient traditions with the promise of the future.

From our Rabbi...

I am writing on the 71th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, on the day the world observes International Holocaust Remembrance Day. It is a different day than our Jewish Yom HaShoah established by the Knesset, but nevertheless it is an important day. Perhaps even more so, since the world takes note.

A meditation in our "old" prayerbook (*Gates of Prayer*, 1975) said "How dare we speak of concord, when the fact and symbol of our age is Auschwitz." Auschwitz remains a fact, and will always be a testimony and witness to the 20th century. But is it still a symbol?

For Jews, of course, the events of the 1940's are of epic proportions, and are indelibly inscribed for eternity. Others too, shocked by the evil of the Nazi regime, have labored to increase understanding, tolerance, and extension of human rights, and to fight against bigotry, discrimination, hatred and genocide. In other corners of the world, however, the desire to eliminate by any means possible those who are different remains a driving force. As ineffectual as the world community might be in preventing attempts at genocide, we must assume that by shining light into the dark corners where hatred exists, we accomplish something.

A few days ago my teacher Rabbi Eugene B. Borowitz died, a month before his 92nd birthday. Professor Borowitz taught modern Jewish philosophy and education at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion for close to 50 years, and really taught our entire Reform Movement through his writings. While so much of our rabbinic curriculum focused on old texts (Bible, rabbinics, liturgy, commentary, medieval philosophy), Dr. Borowitz forced us to understand modern texts, and more importantly, to focus on what we ourselves believed. One of the great challenges of theology today is, of course, the Holocaust.

Our sacred Jewish literature speaks plainly of a God who works openly in history. This is not the God we imagine or believe in today. Rather, the God we can best accept is one that endows humanity with the capacity to act, or to refrain from action. Our task as religious people is to act when we sense the covenantal responsibility to do so. Our continuing role as Jews is to seek to understand what those covenantal responsibilities might be.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Don Cashman

Come Join Us!



For a Wine and Cheese Tasting at B'nai Sholom on Saturday, February 6 at 7 PM. Wine selections provided by Upstate Wine & Spirits of Delaware Plaza, cheese selections provided by Honest Weight Food Co-Op and baguette and ciabatta samples will be served by the Bread and Honey Bakery. Join us at 7 PM in the Sanctuary for Havdalah and then we will proceed to the Social Hall. The cost is free to congregation members and \$5.00 for guests. Please RSVP to Christine Blackman at office@bnaisholom.albany.ny.us or call her at 482-5283. The event is sponsored by your Membership Committee.

Friday Night Potluck March 4, 2016 6 p.m. Service * 7 p.m. Potluck



RSVP:
Mark Silverbush
767-2698

msilver6@nycap.rr.com

Sponsored by the B'nai Sholom Religious School Committee

Jewish Scouting

There are scout troops in Albany that are eager to welcome new boys. Meeting at the Jewish Community Center, and under the sponsorship of Jewish War Veterans Post 105, these troops may be of particular interest to B'nai Sholom families. For example, you can be sure the camp-out won't be scheduled for Yom Kippur, or a pizza party during Passover.

Rabbi Cashman is available to work with students on the Aleph, Ner Tamid, and Etz Chaim emblems. Girl Scouts, too, can ask for help with their Lehavah, Bat Or, Menorah, and Or Emunah awards.

CUB SCOUTS

Pack 18 (Grades 1-5)
Meets Tuesdays 6:15PM at the JCC
Contact: Jesse Weinstock (Cubmaster)
Email: gashach@gmail.com/pack18albany@gmail.com
Phone: 518-222-4070

BOY SCOUTS

Troop 33 (Grades 6-12)
Meets: Thursdays 7:00PM at the JCC
Contact: Adam Selsley (Scoutmaster)
Email: Troop33albany@gmail.com
Phone: 518-368-8713

Upcoming outings:

Tubing/Skiing at Maple Ski Ridge Feb 21 (both Pack and Troop)

Much more coming...including the Pinewood Derby in March.

Mark Your Calendar!!!



**B'NAI SHOLOM
GOODS AND SERVICES AUCTION
Saturday, March 12, 2016
Doors open at 6pm
Live auction starts at 6:30pm**

Bid on a variety of goods and services donated by fellow
B'nai Sholom members.

Past auction items included:

Landscaping work, dinner-for-two gift basket, guitar lessons,
Spectrum movie tickets, photography services,
and much, much more!!

Don't miss out on a fun evening with lots of good
entertainment and a chance to support B'nai Sholom!

Refreshments will be served.
Admission \$5 per person.

Come early to browse the silent auction items on display!

SOCIAL ACTION SHABBAT HIGHLIGHTS CURRENT ACTIVITY AND INTRODUCES A NEW ISSUE: MASS INCARCERATION

At the Social Action Shabbat on Friday, January 8, those assembled for worship and the program afterward learned about the vibrant social action program at B'nai Sholom and were introduced to a new issue the Social Action Committee is interested in exploring. During the Shabbat evening service, Social Action Committee co-chair Valerie Tabak highlighted the activities organized by the committee, in which a wide range of congregants participate. The other committee co-chair, Becky Marvin, then spoke briefly about the issue of the social injustice imposed on African Americans who are incarcerated in disproportionate numbers and who thereafter suffer from restrictions in employment, housing, education, and voting as a consequence of their status as felons.

The committee had urged congregants to read The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, by Michelle Alexander, in preparation for the evening, and Becky's remarks were drawn heavily from the book and from "white papers" produced by the Center for Law and Justice in Albany, founded and headed by Dr. Alice Green.

Following the service, about 60 congregants gathered in the social hall for a lively discussion with Dr. Green about the book and about the work of the Center for Law and Justice to address the issue.

The Center for Law and Justice serves the low-income and disadvantaged communities of New York through education and advocacy, promoting equal access to goods, services and opportunities. One of its primary activities has been to ensure the just treatment of all people in the criminal justice system, to reduce reliance upon incarceration, and to facilitate the successful transition into mainstream society of those residents with a criminal conviction and/or incarceration experience.

Dr. Green has a doctorate in criminal justice and advanced degrees in education, social work, and criminology. She began her career as a secondary school teacher and social worker. For many years, she directed Trinity Institution, a youth and family services center in Albany's South End. She has served on a wide variety of non-profit boards, worked with many community organizations, and worked as a prison volunteer for over 20 years. She served as Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives and as Legislative Director for the New York Civil Liberties Union. In 1998 Dr. Green was the Green Party candidate for Lt. Governor and in 2005 its Albany mayoral candidate.

Dr. Green teaches as an adjunct professor at the University at Albany, has also taught at Russell Sage and Siena Colleges. She writes and lectures on racism and criminal justice and has co-authored several books on the subject. She founded the Center for Law and Justice in 1985 and has served as its Executive Director since then.

Dr. Green explained that the Center has used Alexander's book as a spring board for outreach and discussion of the issue of mass incarceration of African Americans. The vigorous give-and-take among congregants and Dr. Green went well into the evening. While no one particular action emerged as an obvious next step, Dr. Green expressed her support for the "consciousness-raising" that occurred as an important predicate for action.

The Social Action Committee will continue to discuss ways to carry on this important conversation. Any congregant interested in being part of that discussion is welcome to attend the committee meetings on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the synagogue, with the next meeting on Thursday, February 4. Alternatively, contact co-chairs Valerie Tabak at walksing53@aol.com or Becky Marvin at rmarvin@nycap.rr.com.

BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION: MASS INCARCERATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE MINORITY COMMUNITY

by Becky Marvin

(Largely excerpted from "The Disproportionate Impact of the Criminal Justice System on People of Color in the Capital Region" by Alice P. Green.)



On January 8, Social Action Shabbat, we began a conversation about the issue of mass incarceration and the effects on our communities, particularly minority communities. In her 2010 book, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, Michelle Alexander contends that the restrictions imposed upon African Americans by mass incarceration serve to create a new "racial caste" system in which "people of color are locked into an inferior position by law and custom."

The declaration of a federal "war on drugs" and the passage of the state "Rockefeller Drug Laws" spurred a phenomenal surge in mass incarceration in New York during the last three decades of the 20th century. From 1970 to 2000, the number of inmates incarcerated in state prisons for all offenses increased by 468%, but the number of inmates incarcerated in state prisons for drug offenses increased by an astounding 2,000%. Regrettably, the mass incarceration of people of color from the Capital Region, particularly from Albany County, has historically far exceeded (and continues to exceed) other jurisdictions in the state.

Because of the way federal and state laws were constructed and enforced, the increased imprisonment for drug offenses produced a disproportionate impact on minorities. For example, a federal sentencing structure established in 1986 gave far harsher penalties for crack cocaine (associated with blacks) than for powder cocaine (associated with whites). Known as the "100-to-1" drug ratio," crack cocaine was accorded 100 times the weight of powder cocaine. Thus, a person convicted of selling 5 grams of crack was subject to the same five-year mandatory minimum sentence as someone convicted of selling 500 grams of powder cocaine. Discriminatory enforcement only exacerbated the inherent structural inequity of the drug laws. Although 24% of crack cocaine users were African Americans, 80% of those who were sentenced for crack offenses were African American.

Discrimination in housing, education, employment, and voting rights is perfectly legal against anyone labeled a "felon." And since many more people of color than whites are made felons by the entire system of mass incarceration, racial discrimination remains as powerful as it was under slavery or under the post-slavery era of Jim Crow segregation.

In New York, a convicted felon may face barriers to employment, housing, and educational opportunities. An American Bar Association database lists 1,113 statutes that impose collateral consequences in New York State alone. Federal law provides municipal housing authorities the right to deny public housing to an applicant with a criminal history or even to an applicant related to or associated with someone with a criminal history. For example, a single mother with two young children might be evicted from public housing when her ex-husband has been determined to be a felon. Eligibility for federal student financial aid can also be affected by a criminal conviction.

Perhaps the most significant collateral consequence of a criminal conviction is suspension of the right to vote. As of 2010, incarcerated felons in 48 states and the District of Columbia were ineligible to vote; in 35 of these states, persons on probation and/or parole were also ineligible, and in 12 states even people who completed their felony sentence may be ineligible to vote. In New

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(Mass Incarceration continued)

York, those incarcerated for a felony conviction or on parole for a felony conviction may not vote. Once released from incarceration or supervision, a person with a felony conviction may register or re-register to vote. An estimated 38% of the total disenfranchised population in the country is African American, far greater than their 13% share of the national population. In New York State, African Americans comprise 16% of the general population, but an astounding 64% of the disenfranchised.

Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar, founder and chairman of the Aleph Institute, which serves Jews in prison and their families, wrote "A Torah Perspective on Incarceration as a Modality of Punishment and Rehabilitation." In it he states, "*Jewish tradition teaches that everything in this universe was created by God with a positive purpose -- to be utilized completely without waste. Accordingly, in the criminal justice system, punishment should effect direct results and benefits for all parties involved: the perpetrator, victim and society in general. For the criminal, the consequential punishment of crime brings penance, atonement, rehabilitation and ultimate purging. After being punished, one starts with a fresh slate; Jewish law dictates that the community must accept the wrongdoer as before and he regains a place in the World to Come.*" In other words, once "the debt to society has been paid" the criminal regains a place in his or her community with FULL rights and responsibilities, and we should not place impediments in the way.

There is a rich history of Jews and African Americans coalescing on social injustices and human rights. It is the hope of the Social Action Committee that this conversation will provide an impetus to continue that tradition.

SOCIAL ACTION AT B'NAI SHOLOM IS DYNAMIC AND DIVERSE!

by Valerie Tabak



The Social Action Committee strives to choose projects that reflect the Reform Jewish perspective and that represent our congregation in the Capital District. We participate in a variety of projects that help specific community groups and the greater community at large. Activities include presenting educational materials and programs to the congregation, informing public officials about Reform Jewish positions on current issues and legislation, and encouraging congregational support and engagement in these activities.

We would like to thank all of the congregants who have supported and participated in the following projects in which we have, and or will continue to provide our resources and efforts. We cannot do this without our fellow congregants and are very thankful for the congregation's continued support and participation.

The Social Action Committee currently focuses on:

Childhood Literacy:

The Vera Propp Social Action Fund was established in honor and memory of long-time congregant, Vera Propp. Through this program we established and underwrite *Books for Babies*. Through a local OB-GYN office that serves a considerable number of economically challenged families, we distribute children's board books and literature in both English and Spanish to

(Continued on page 8)

(Social Action continued)

expectant parents emphasizing the importance of reading to their babies in utero and throughout the formative years.

Our yearly contributions to the Jewish Federation's Capital District Coalition for Literacy and to the Whitney Young Health Center enable us to partner in the purchase of books for specialized literacy programs.

Universal Healthcare:

Capital District Alliance for Universal Healthcare (CADAUH) had its start at B'nai Sholom and we continue to support and participate in its mission that all people deserve affordable and comprehensive healthcare. [The Healthcare Movie](#) has been screened in many libraries, colleges and other community venues throughout the capital district.

Hunger:

We continue our membership in Hunger Action Network of NYS and support the *Empty Bowls* annual fundraiser cosponsored by the Focus Churches, a coalition of Protestant Christian congregations in Albany. The wonderful bakers of BSRC provide all of the sweets and treats for the event, which this year will be held on Sunday, February 14 at the Elks Club on South Lake in Albany. If you would like to attend, invitations are available in the foyer of the synagogue.

Our participation in the Sunday Soup Kitchen operated by Congregation Beth Emeth provides the opportunity to assist in preparing and serving meals to our Albany neighbors.

We continue to collect nonperishable food and personal care items for the Regional Food Bank. We encourage everyone to bring something each time they attend services and other functions at B'nai Sholom.

Annual Blood Drives and Clothing Drives:

Twice a year we sponsor a Red Cross Blood Drive. On those days we also hold a clothing drive for seasonal clothing. **Watch your bulletin for our spring date.**

Homelessness:

Family Promise of the Capital Region opened in April of 2015. Family Promise is an interfaith response to support homeless families with young children. These families, who are in need of support and shelter while they seek employment and housing, often cannot take advantage of conventional single-sex shelters. Approximately 13 different faith congregations provide food and shelter on a rotating basis, so that each congregation hosts homeless families overnight for four different weeks per year. We partner with Delmar Presbyterian Church, another small congregation. It provides shelter at the church, with the assistance of B'nai Sholom volunteers who provide meals and evening or overnight companionship to the families. Our first two families have already graduated into their own apartments and we will continue to work with them for the next year. We are always in need of volunteers who can help with meals, help at the day center and other rewarding opportunities.

The following Yahrts will be observed in February.

- 2/5 Jerome Ruzow; Milton Kesler; Sarah Koblenz Pock*; Eleanor Newman Blum; Phillip Green; Morris Cohen;
- 2/12 Sherryl Pflanz*; Helen Rehr; Rose Goldberg; Ida Goldstein; Benjamin L. Dubb*; Chay Soon Boon; Irma Bruce; Frederic Neuburger; George Rifkin;
- 2/19 Joyce Epstein*; Augusta Lichtenfels*; Leah Altmayer; Pearl Ronay; Sophie Scholl Small; Arlan Walker*; Esther Weiss; Ruth Warshaw*; Samuel Strohl; Lena Semelisky*; Morris Wagner*; Helen Goldfarb*; Edith Watnick; Alfred Cohen*; Elsie Meer;
- 2/26 Frances K Singer*; Ida Roth*; Irwin Portnick; Eugene Tuck; Jerome Flax; Avi Ezra; Paul Rosenthal; Jonas Bernstein*; Stanley Levy; Murray Maurer; Evelyn Turoff*

**denotes that a Perpetual Memorial has been established.*

THE CONGREGATION NOTES WITH THANKS THESE CONTRIBUTIONS...

General Fund

In memory of **Aaron David Stoller** by Howard, Bettina and Jeremy Stoller.
In memory of **Jack Jarett** and **Avraham Koren** by Yossi and Amy Koren-Roth.
In memory of **Theron Vosburgh** by Hal Rosenthal and Mari Vosburgh
In memory of **Gerald Davis** by Ellie and Randy Davis.
In memory of **Olaf "Sonny" Hausgaard** by Ellie and Randy Davis.
In memory of **Benjamin Sacks** by Paula Philo.
In memory of **Michael Kramer** by Mindy Kramer.
In memory of **Leo Cabelly** by the Seguire Family.
In memory of **Eleanor Marvin** by Ben and Becky Marvin.
In honor of **the marriage of her son, Adam Hatch to Rachel Peterson** by Candace Raderman.
In honor of **their children's teachers and friends** by Steve Morse and Brenda Hazard.
For a **guest ticket for the Days of Awe** by Judith Sagor.
For **being able to attend Kol Nidre services** by Stephen Scheiber.

Social Action Fund

In appreciation of **the congregation's friendship and support** by Steve Morse and Brenda Hazard.

Social Action Fund - Family Promise Program

In honor of **Melanie Rockefeller passing her State of Maine Social Work Pre-Licensing Exam** by Nancy and Larry Rockefeller.

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In appreciation of **the Rabbi's work with their children** by Steve Morse and Brenda Hazard.
Cecile and Keith Kowalski

Scholarship Fund

In memory of **Jerome I. Ruzow** by Susan Libby.
In memory of **Lillian K. Ruzow** by Susan Libby.

<http://www.bnaisholom.albany.ny.us/donations>

IT'S SNOWING—ARE WE OPEN? Check the telephone message on the BSRC answering machine for up-to-date information about cancellations. We will also try to post cancellations on our web site. You may also subscribe to cancellation e-mails on our website.



TAX SERVICES BEING OFFERED AT BSRC: AARP, working with BSRC's neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community, is offering tax assistance for seniors on the following Tuesdays: 2/2, 2/9, 2/16, 2/23, 3/29 and 4/5 from 9 AM - 3 PM. Because we are hosting, BSRC congregants are eligible to use this service for free.

THANK YOU

to the following congregants who recently hosted an Oneg Shabbat: Rita and Arthur Alowitz, the Social Action Committee, Susan Libby, Barbara and Howard Nahmias, and the Library Committee.
to the Bulletin Brigade who helped fold, insert and stuff envelopes to get the January bulletin out: Joan Savitt.

RABBI: Donald P. Cashman
PRESIDENT: Melody Bruce
OFFICE MANAGER: Christine Blackman
BOOKKEEPER: Lisa Allendorph
OFFICE HOURS: MON/WED/THURS/FRI 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM



URGENT!
Give Bubbe a Ride
Project 5 needs volunteers to fill in for our drivers who are in Florida for the winter.

Many of our regular drivers head south for the winter, but local Jewish seniors who no longer drive still need occasional rides to medical appointments, errands, social events and religious services.

GET INVOLVED
Do a mitzvah and help a senior. Get reimbursed for mileage. Drive as much or as little as you want.
Please call JFS to sign up: 518-482-8856




Supported by Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York

As a rule, the BULLETIN DEADLINE is the second Wednesday of each month.	
Period Covered	Deadline
March	February 10
April	March 9
<i>Articles and news received after deadline are subject to omission.</i>	