



Congregation
B'nai Israel
קהילת בני ישראל

2710 Park Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06604-1302

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Welcome to Congregation B'nai Israel!

Congregation B'nai Israel has been a gathering space for Reform Jews of all ages and backgrounds for over 160 years, blending sacred traditions with new and creative ways of expressing Judaism that speaks to the next generation.

We hope that as you enter the doors of B'nai Israel you will feel at home. We strive to be a spiritual place where we celebrate individuals as well as families and we welcome you to be a part of our synagogue community. We aim to foster meaningful Jewish conversation, vibrant Jewish worship and music, engaging Jewish learning, and impactful social justice work both within our community and the world around us.

As you read through the pages of this booklet, we hope that you will think about the ways that you want to connect and get involved. Our community strengthens as we collaborate - through the talents and gifts of our members we are all elevated together.

We would love to schedule a time to meet with you personally to get to know you better. Our rabbis, Evan Schultz and Sarah Marion, and our membership chair, Jill Elbaum, look forward to meeting with you for coffee and to show you around B'nai Israel. Please find our contact information below.

Thank you again for connecting with us and we hope to see you here at Congregation B'nai Israel soon!

With gratitude,
Rabbi Evan Schultz

Rabbi Evan Schultz – eschultz@cbibpt.org

Rabbi Sarah Marion – smarion@cbibpt.org

Jill Elbaum, Membership Chair, jelbaum@cbibpt.org

Who We Are

At Congregation B'nai Israel, we join as a sacred community to explore and engage in all aspects of the Jewish journey. Through conversation and connections we strive to discover how Judaism can enrich our lives as individuals, as a congregation and in the community around us. We learn, worship, study and pursue justice together in an effort to uphold Jewish values for ourselves and generations to come. Together we strive to make connections to God, the Greater Bridgeport community and one another. At B'nai Israel we gather to nourish our spiritual souls and take a holistic approach to making our lives and Jewish journeys meaningful. Collectively we foster a supportive, inclusive environment where we can grow, celebrate and find solace together.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Rabbi Evan Schultz
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Rabbi Sarah Marion
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Cantor Sheri Blum
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Ira J. Wise, DJRE
Director of Education

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Alexa Cohen
Early Childhood Center Director

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SYNAGOGUE PROGRAMS

Shabbat Worship

Friday Evening/Erev Shabbat

Oneg and candle lighting	5:30 p.m.
Shabbat Service	6:00 p.m.

Saturday Morning Shabbat

Early Service	8:00 a.m.
Mid-Morning Service	11:00 a.m.

Education

Bonim Early Childhood Education Center

Our pre-school offers full time and part time child care and Pre-school education for infants – age 5.
Please contact Alexa Cohen at acohen@cbibpt.org for more information.

Religious Education

- Gan-Kitah Gimel (K-3) meets Sundays 9:30 a.m.-noon
- Kitah Daled-Vav (4-6) meets Sundays 9:30 a.m.-noon and Thursdays 4:30-6:00 p.m.
- Kitot Zayin-Chet (7-8) meets Tuesdays 7:00-8:30 p.m.
- Merkaz (Kitot Tet-Yud Bet or 9-12) meets Tuesdays 6:50-8:50 p.m.

Please contact Ira Wise at iwise@cbibpt.org for more information.

Adult Learning

As a vibrant Reform community, B'nai Israel recognizes the need to find the time to nourish our minds and our souls. B'nai Israel has extensive opportunities for adult Jewish learning. Our goal is to create a community where people of all ages can become energized by sharing in experiences of Jewish learning.

We provide opportunities to develop a spiritual, educational and social connection to Jewish life and to the congregation, as well as to integrate Judaism into people's daily lives. We have ongoing classes, seminars and weekend workshops. Learning topics range from the study of classic texts, Hebrew, ethics and current events. Here are a few of our recent selections:

- Introduction to Judaism
- Beginning and Conversational Hebrew
- One Temple, One Book
- Let's Talk About God
- Health and Medicine in the Jewish Tradition
- Six Days that Changed The Middle East

Torah Study

Torah study takes place every Shabbat morning, immediately following the Brotherhood's bagel breakfast. No experience with Hebrew or even Torah is required. An inquisitive mind is the only prerequisite.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Young Families

Havurah – A weekly opportunity for families with children ages 0-5 to celebrate Shabbat through singing, activities, stories and community. We meet most Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. at the synagogue for bagels followed by a fun and creative family service.

Mishpacha Shabbat – A monthly Shabbat dinner for families with children in pre-school through elementary school. We begin in the main Shabbat service then leave mid-way through and gather for a festive dinner.

Keshet (rainbow)- responds to the special needs of the youngest members of our Jewish community. We bring children together to engage in a Jewish enrichment and social skills experience with our special needs education teachers while parents meet separately in a supportive environment to meet other B'nai Israel members who serve the needs of families with special needs.

The Festival Committee plans and executes programming for the holidays of Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Shavuot and Purim. We aim to bring fun, fresh and engaging ideas to help our community celebrate these holidays together.

Outreach

The Chesed or Caring Committee offers meals to families when illness occurs or at other times when household routines are disrupted. We provide rides for congregants for synagogue programs and health appointments as well as in-home visits and phone calls to those who are alone, isolated or unable to leave their home. Our congregants are supportive and helpful to each other in times of need and celebration.

Tikkun Olam at B'nai Israel aims to perform acts of kindness and human action in an effort to help repair the world. Our work is organized in the three areas described below:

Direct Service encompasses activities that our congregants perform at our temple and within our local community. Some of our many projects include preparing dinners for shelters and monthly Mitzvah Mornings where we meet in the community to support local programs such as Homes for the Brave, Nourish Bridgeport, St. John's Church and Operation Hope. We serve meals, plant gardens and pack holiday gifts as a synagogue group while interacting with local community members. We are always looking to expand our reach to help those less fortunate in our community and beyond.

Advocacy is the public presence of B'nai Israel where congregants can organize and participate in marches and rallies for causes such as LGBT pride, Israel, March for Our Lives for common sense gun legislation and others.

Community Organizing is primarily focused around CONECT, Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut. CONECT is an organization of 15,000 people from 25 religious institutions ranging geographically from Norwalk to New Haven. These institutions are ethnically diverse, a mix of urban and suburban and multi-faith. As a member of CONECT, B'nai Israel seeks to discover, research, analyze and articulate a powerful moral voice to negotiate with business and government leaders regarding social, economic and political issues that affect our member congregations and our community.



Kulanu (All of Us)- consists of LGBTQ Jews of all ages and levels of spirituality. Non-Jewish partners and spouses are welcome and often join our gatherings for a place to meet others who want to experience Judaism. We join together for Shabbat dinners, Jewish holiday celebrations, discussions and outreach programs to bring LGBTQ issues to the larger community. Kulanu provides an opportunity to be positive role models for the younger LGBTQ members who are children of congregants. We recognize that everyone has their own story, and we welcome you to share yours.

The Keshet Project is a privately funded, not-for-profit program that kindles the light of Judaism in developmentally challenged adults. Keshet focuses on the ritual and spirit of Jewish holidays and incorporates arts and crafts and snacks with the traditional Jewish songs of each holiday. The group has bonded into a loving family. The participants' enthusiasm and joy in learning and sharing with each other is truly wonderful for them, for their families and for the volunteers who support them.

College Committee reminds students who are members of the congregation that even while they are away at school, they remain an integral part of our community. We send care packages to students several times a year including small gifts and letters from the Rabbis helping them remain connected with B'nai Israel. Our Nussbaum-Fields Scholarship provides stipends for students who take classes in Jewish Studies.



SOCIAL PROGRAMMING

BIFTY (B'nai Israel Federation of Temple Youth) is our high school youth group that meets once a week in the BIFTY lounge at B'nai Israel to participate in social, social action, and Jewish programs. BIFTY is also a part of NFTY (National Federation of Temple Youth) and enables our teens to become involved with programming and leadership on a regional level. BIFTY members often serve on the NFTY regional board.

Teens of CBI is a purely social group of high school students that meets a few times a year to engage in fun social activities outside of the temple.

The Junior Youth Group consists of 4th-8th graders that meets a few times a year with the goal of providing the youth of B'nai Israel with opportunities to gather together to strengthen social relationships through meaningful and fun shared experiences.

ReConnect is a social group of adults over the age of 50 at Congregation B'nai Israel. We encourage our members to remain connected with each other and stay engaged in the synagogue particularly after their children leave the home. Isn't that when our fun is supposed to resume? We offer educational and social programs such as guided trips to museums, evenings to the theater or lectures and Shabbat dinners. Every other year we try to organize a cultural group travel experience through a temple tours program. Past trips include Israel, Cuba and Eastern Europe.

Women of B'nai Israel (WBI) is our newly-evolved Sisterhood. We are an intergenerational group dedicated to helping women in our congregation connect with each other. This new name was adopted in the Spring of 2018. We are a social group of caring and progressive women exploring the ways in which we can best impact our community together. WBI supports a variety of initiatives at our synagogue including scholarship funds, BIFTY (B'nai Israel Temple Youth), and social events throughout the year. We are working to grow the group in membership, engagement and scope and always welcome new ideas that will connect more women within our temple community.

B'nai Israel Brotherhood provides camaraderie and fraternity and is an integral part of our synagogue community. Some of our successful programs include our weekly Brotherhood Breakfast after Shabbat morning services and Religious School barbecues courtesy of the "Pressure Cookers". Brotherhood also sponsors Sunday movies at the synagogue and guest speakers. The Brotherhood offers financial support to the Religious School Scholarship fund as well as many local charities. Involvement in the Brotherhood is a wonderful way to make and maintain friendships and engage in synagogue life.

Greater Bridgeport Jews brings together individuals in their 20s and 30s for social and spiritual events such as hiking, lectures, Shabbat services and bar nights.

SERVING THE SYNAGOGUE

The Religious Practices Committee meets 3-4 times a year with B'nai Israel's clergy. We address a variety of issues relating to ritual practice at the synagogue. Our goal is to ensure that the spirituality of our religious services are comprehensive and inclusive.

The Fundraising Committee develops and implements fundraising strategies. We plan events and organize campaigns to raise money to support all areas of synagogue programming. Recent events include Comedy Night, our annual Spring Gala and a "Brick" campaign to beautify the entrance to our synagogue.

The House Committee or Facilities Committee is charged with the care and direction of the physical building and grounds of B'nai Israel. We develop long-range capital budgets for upgrades and maintenance. We work in conjunction with the Art and Design Committee and facilities rental to keep our synagogue safe, efficient and aesthetically up-to-date.

The Investment and Endowment Committee manages the congregation's investment portfolio and advises the Board of Trustees and officers regarding this investment portfolio as appropriate. Investments include the congregation's endowment funds, The Fields Estate, The Building Fund and Special Purpose Funds. The Investment and Endowment Committee meets at least twice annually with our investment advisor to review our portfolio performance and to consider adjusting our investments.

The Budget Committee is responsible for tracking and reporting on the synagogue's financial situation to the Board of Trustees. Each spring the committee proposes a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. The committee holds a series of meetings with synagogue leaders and staff to discuss their budget proposals. The Budget Committee is charged with creating a balanced budget proposal that considers the needs of the synagogue with its best projections for future revenue and expenses.



The Religious School Committee:

The Community Building Team focuses on our school's day-to-day operations. They coordinate the Room Parent program, special events like the Book Fair, Purim Carnival, picnics and special dinner events for each grade. This team's job is to bring people together and help build relationships between the families in our school.

The Vision Team is where we are imagining the future of religious education at B'nai Israel. Here is where we regularly ask "What are your hopes for your children?" "What dreams do you have about your family?" The members of this team are our imagineers. We are constantly exploring how to align our curriculum and teaching methodologies with the values of our 21st century congregation. We seek new ways to help teachers provide our students with the Jewish tools they will need to create meaning in their lives.

The Faculty is an important component of both the Community Building and Vision teams. Our teachers are wonderful-most are members of our congregation who believe it really does take a village to raise a Jewish child. All of our teachers, members or not, consider themselves part of our community.





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