

Agudas Achim Congregation

401 E. Oakdale Blvd., Coralville, IA 52241 Phone: 319-337-3813 www.AgudasAchimIC.org

January 2024 / Tevet-Shevat 5784

FROM THE RABBI Esther Hugenholtz

A very happy 2024, Agudas Achim family! I hope you are all staying cozy during this delightfully calm and quiet time of year, a time for a reset and reimagination.

During these difficult months, I've often found myself glancing back at our High Holiday season. It seems so far away now, but the memories have a golden glow. There is no denying that at least in this point in time, 2023 feels like it was split in 'before October 7th' and 'after October 7th'. Each of us will continue to wrestle deeply with what that means and how it impacts us, and it is also my prayer that, despite the political uncertainties, we can find an increasing measure of peace and healing.

It may be both ironic and predictable that global events highlight the relevance of local connections. Over these last months, I have been privileged to have so many deep, sacred and yes, sometimes difficult, conversations with many of you. It is at moments like these where I feel most honored to be a rabbi; to be with my community through its trials. I also know that any community (including ours) is confronted with a formidable task during a crisis like this: to stay together, to navigate diversity and difference and to be in mutual support and solidarity with each other. I am so proud of how we as Agudas Achim are continuing to do that. I am proud of our Board, lay leadership and professionals in the organization but also the many congregants who have shown up, prayed, sang, cried, conversed and connected with each other over this period. I am so grateful we had a

facilitated session on Israel and am even more grateful for its success. We need each other to weather this storm.

Small and local is where it is at for me. Every day, I am reminded of the blessings of living in a community like lowa City/Coralville. I, too, have found my people to lean on here, to argue with, to think things through and shoulders to cry on. Those deep connections in a lonely and globalized world have a price beyond pearls.

And I also know that 2024 is the beginning of many new and exciting things. First of all, I want to say an important goodbye. As of this secular new year, our beloved and gifted administrator Karen Pallesen Brady has started her well-earned retirement. Karen was my partner in so many things; a competent and wise colleague, a kindred-fun-loving spirit and of course, a dear friend. I had the honor of arriving at the congregation when Karen had already started; she was instrumental in my transition. We worked closely together for almost seven years, through thick and thin and some might say 'through hell and highwater' given what we've been through these last years! She made our congregation observably better and John and I will miss her dearly.

However, endings also signal new beginnings. One of the great joys of my professional duties has been to work alongside John Wertz, our secretary, and to see him grow in his role. He executes his duties

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FROM THE RABBI

Esther Hugenholtz (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

with diligence, dedication and vision; always going above and beyond and often noticing details that offer improvements for our community. Like Karen, he is my partner in the office and a joy to work with. He has now 'made a promotion' and will continue as our current administrator.

And, please allow me to welcome our new member of the office team: Hannah Sandler! I have known Hannah's enthusiastic and creative spirit for many years now as a loyal and devoted Sunday School teacher and so we are absolutely delighted to learn that she could fill the vacancy Karen's retirement and John's promotion left open. I tend not to do 'interventionist theology' but Hannah's stepping up to the plate has been our little 'Hanukkah miracle'!

Please extend us grace as we reconfigure our office, and extend a goodbye to Karen, a mazal tov to John and a welcome to Hannah. I am very honored to work side-by-side with this amazing team every day.

Glancing back is also looking ahead, which feels fitting for a fresh, new January. During the High Holidays, we focused a lot on Jewish joy, connection, community and innovation. As the

President wrote in his message, we intend on continuing down this positive path as we also seek gentleness and healing from current events. We will continue to build up and implement the ideas from our Board retreat and I hope to continue with my community building and outreach projects as I was doing before. I hope to launch another 'Taste of Judaism' three-session course sometime late winter/early spring and am preparing to do a series on death and mourning for adult education. We are looking to provide more guidance on Jewish views and practices of bereavement and are also hoping to expand our Chevra Kadisha (burial society). If you are curious or interested in serving on the Chevra Kadisha and want to learn more about it – shoot me an email! We also look forward to continuing our thriving collaboration between the Tikkun Olam Committee and the Free Lunch Program, providing with opportunities of spiritual learning and growth and social engagement and connection, building ever stronger bridges in a world that needs it so much.

Enjoy this quiet time. Before you know it, it will be Tu Bishvat, Purim and Pesach. But right now, there is still some snow on the ground and fresh pages in our calendar. May this quiet time bring us a soft spirit and a bright vision for what is yet to be.

MAHJONG

Join us at MahJong on Sunday January 7 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. Please RSVP to kklipman@aol.com by the Wednesday before if you plan on coming.

Bring a MahJong card if you have one.



FROM THE PRESIDENT David Lubaroff

It is traditional to read in newspapers and magazines, and to see scheduled telecasts during the last week in December on retrospectives about the current year. Variously titled The Year in Review, The Best (movie, book, play, game, etc.) of the Year, and more. It rarely matters that some of the events are horrible and best left in the past. I too, have spoken and written about the bad things we have experienced at Agudas Achim, but now would prefer to concentrate on the good things in our lives. This means our personal lives and synagogue lives.

We do not have to look hard to find positive and progressive actions associated with our Shul. It all starts with the people. We are blessed with dedicated, honest, caring, collaborative people working hard to bring Judaism to all who chose to become members. This starts at the top – with Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz. There are many facets that make her, as one lay leader put it, "The best thing that has happened to us in a long time." I have worked closely with her for two and one-half years and feel that I can appreciate the truth in that statement. She leads religious services with enthusiasm and a talent for teaching. "Rabbi Esther" is also innovative, creating a series of alternative Shabbat services that would appeal to our diverse membership. But, above all, she is caring. It is important to her that our members are happy and take advantage of the many religious and social events available to them. It is she who brought us through dark times; the years of the COVID pandemic and now in the midst of the horrible war in Israel.

Rabbi Esther is supported by many lay leaders, people who are members of the board of trustees, members of the many standing and ad hoc committees, the office staff, and the religious school principal. The board met shortly after taking office at a 2-day retreat that served to introduce our working model of respect and collaboration. The model is working well in the months following

the retreat. The highly successful and spiritually moving High Holiday services was the result of collaborations between the ritual and social committees, working closely with our Rabbi. Additional successes include Sukkot and Simchat Torah, the Hanukkah Party and Bazaar, multiple adult education events, innovative and alternative Shabbat services, and the first event for our youth in over two years.

Our religious school has recovered beautifully from the pandemic years. A new curriculum, first developed prior to the pandemic and delayed until this year, is showing another huge success. The number of students enrolled in school has grown and the students are engaged and enjoying their time on Sunday mornings. Again, collaborations among many produced positive outcomes we see today. Working together were our religious school principal, multiple editions of the education committee, the Rabbi, and the talented and dedicated teachers.

For the last few years our safety committee has been hardening our synagogue funded by multiple grants from the federal government to make our property resistant to attacks from the outside. These included bullet-resistant film on all glass windows and doors, installation of multiple indoor and outdoor cameras, and controlled access to the building. The next project in progress is the placement of protective fencing in the rear. Six trees were relocated to other locations on the grounds to make room for the fence. The final part of the project, destined for this spring, is the installation of a playground structure for the children within the newly fenced area.

Even in the wake of the very bad news of October 7 and the Israel-Hamas war that ensued, our synagogue has worked to help members cope with the horrible tragedies that have been ongoing during the three-plus months. Collaborations of the Rabbi, the board, and committees organized

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FROM THE PRESIDENT David Lubaroff (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

multiple gatherings to allow members to mourn losses, express their feelings, and just be together for one another. Similar opportunities for expression of loss, fear, and concern for the survival of Israel were available on Friday evening and Saturday morning. All is not smooth when dealing with the ongoing war. Being a diverse membership means we have diverse opinions which has led to much stress and some conflicts. The positive is that we allow and encourage and not discourage open

discussions. It is a matter of looking at the upshot of diverse opinions not the downside.

There are many more "good news" happenings at Agudas Achim and more to come in this coming secular year of 2024. The Rabbi, board, committees, principal, and office staff are dedicated to going forward and making our glass half full not half empty".

Regards,

David Lubaroff

FROM THE FORMER ADMINISTRATOR Karen Brady

I want to thank everyone for making the last 7.5 years so enjoyable and rewarding for me. When Kathy Jacobs asked me to apply for the secretary job, I thought "Sure, I can do this for awhile - until I find a real job..." Nina and Barry had me do some sample tasks, which I thought I failed at. But before I even drove home, they called with a job offer.

The small office atmosphere was a perfect fit for me. The variety of tasks, the music coming from the Rabbi's office (from both Barry and Esther), the personal interactions with wonderful people (but not too many people like the corporate atmosphere had...). The warm welcoming from Nina, Rabbi Jeff,

Sonja, Michael, Kathy, Sue, Janice, David, Mindy and other board members and helpers.

I have learned so much - about Judaism (of which I knew nothing), about the kindness of people, about the importance of volunteering, and about myself. I have so enjoyed getting to know many of you. Rabbi Esther and John have become family. I will miss seeing you nearly every day. But you are in good hands with John and Hannah. I will still pop up now and then at the synagogue, and will forever consider myself partly Jewish at heart.

Thank you all for the best job I ever had!

Karen

DECEMBER ONEG HOSTS

Thank you to December oneg hosts!

Joan & Marcus Nashelsky, Jayne & Mark Sandler, Ruth & Doug Nathanson and Douglas & Beverly Jones

If you'd like to sponsor an oneg, contact the office!

FROM THE CARING COMMITTEE Nancy Goldsmith, Susan Lutgendorf, & Teresa Weiner

Agudas Achim's Caring Committee coordinates volunteers to support members of our congregation and community. Volunteers offer comfort, connection, and assistance through participation in Meal Trains, inperson and phone visits, providing rides, making deliveries, and other ways of reaching out to each other.

Contact us at caring@agudasachimic.org

May we add you to our volunteer list? Please email your contact information to us! Can our volunteers help you? Don't hesitate to ask—just email your request to us!

OFFICE CHANGES

Long-time office administrator Karen Brady is now officially retired (she will still be popping in to help us from time to time). We thank her for her many years of dedication to the synagogue and wish her the best in her retirement. John Wertz is now the administrator (he can now be reached at administrator@agudasachimic.org) and Hannah Sandler is now the secretary (she can be reached at secretary@agudasachimic.org). Hannah and John are excited to step in to their new roles.



MEETING WITH RABBI HUGENHOLTZ

<u>We've set up a Calendly link here</u> for setting up meetings automatically with Rabbi Hugenholtz. We are reserving Wednesday and Thursday from 4-6 for B-Mitzvah meetings specifically, but feel free to schedule a meeting with her if you'd like. Meetings can be via Zoom, via telephone, or in person.

TIKKUN OLAM COMMITTEE NEWS Mal Hellman

Donation Drive for Houses Into Homes

Agudas Achim Tikkun Olam committee will be collecting donations for Houses into Homes, a Coralville-based community organization that helps low-income individuals and families furnish their homes free of cost. Furniture items and home goods are delivered to each household based on needs and taste.

Those interested in donating may drop off their donations at the Agudas Achim office between December 1 and January 31st.

This season, Houses into Homes needs:

- Table knives
- Pots and pans
- Kitchen trash cans
- Lamps (table and floor)
- Phillips head screwdrivers
- Hangers
- Toasters,
- Shower curtain liners (must be new)

All items should be free of stains and odors.

CELEBRATE RABBI HUGENHOLTZ

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, February 24, 2024

AT AGUDAS ACHIM

Shabbat Service and Luncheon

To Honor and Show Appreciation For

Rabbi Esther Hugenholtz

We are soliciting your positive thoughts and comments about Rabbi Hugenholtz. If you wish to contribute, please send them by email to secretary@agudasachimic.org.

Further details will be forthcoming in the February Bulletin.

SHABBAT SERVICES

Streaming link for Zoom Shabbat services

Note: We are continuing our experiment of alternating Reform and Conservative services for the month of January. If you have feedback, please <u>contact the ritual committee</u>.

Shemot	Friday, January 5	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah (Reform)
(Exodus 1:1-6:1)	Saturday, January 6	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem (Conservative)
Vaera	Friday, January 12	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem
(Exodus 6:2-9:35)	Saturday, January 13	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah
Во	Friday, January 19	7:00 p.m.	Mishkan T'filah
(Exodus 10:1-13:16)	Saturday, January 20	9:30 a.m.	Lev Shalem
Beshalach	Friday, January 26	7:00 p.m.	Lev Shalem
(Exodus 13:7-17:16)	Saturday, January 27	9:30 a.m.	Mishkan T'filah

JANUARY YAHRZEITS

Michael Balch	Joseph Greenberg	Hannah Pauline Scheer Berg
Phyllis Bills	Irving Gussin	James Robin
David Blum	Charles Hecht	Nathan Rodnitzky
Kent Braverman	Doris Hoffman	Belle Rosenbaum
Jack Joseph Brown	Sylvia Kaufman	Dennis Saletta
James Terrell Bryant	Simone Kay	Susan Schechter
Barbara Jean Bunnell	Pauline A. Kerber	Joyce Schiller
Charles Henry Clements	Shmarya Kleinman	Lama Shetzer
Mary Jessie Clements	Daniel Kroloff	LaVerne Siebuhr
Jacob Haravon Collins	Vivian Kroloff	David Silversteen
Belle Coster	Boris Kuperman	Edie Singer
Anna Lea Dvoretzky	Louis Landweber	Betty Snider
Lillian Edwards	Harry Levin	Benjamin Sprince
Anna Federbusch	Ruth Levy	Isaac Strauss
Marlene Garfin	Betty Mangers	Larry Tepper
Miriam Gelfand	Marvin Marcus	Janet Whitebook
Gloria Gelman	Meyer Markovitz	Rose Widiss
Webster Gelman	Tamara Mazur	Celia Wolf
Ruth Ginsberg	Edna Irene McGinnis	Morris L. Ziskind
Merrel Goldberg	David Moyer	
Rose Goldman	Mary S. Naylor	

DONATIONS

HIGH HOLIDAY FUND

Mel & Diane Sunshine: In memory of Joseph

Sunshine and Betty Brodsky

GENERAL FUND

Margo & Don Blumenthal: In memory of

Gary Fingert

Caplan Family Foundation

Michael & Judith Cilek: In memory of Gary Fingert

Joel Dressler: In memory of Gary Fingert Paul & Barbara Friedman: In memory of

Gary Fingert

Jim & Elise Galinsky: In memory of Gary Fingert

Bruce Gantz

Marcia Gotsdiner-Salem: In memory of

Gary Fingert

Michael & Sally Hood: In memory of Gary Fingert

Marty Iroff: Thank you Rabbi H, mazel tov to

Andrea, Joe, Evy, Levi

Jeanne Jaggard: In memory of Harold Jaffe **Edward Johnson**: In memory of Gary Fingert

David Leshtz & Sondra Smith

Richard Levine: In memory of Bernice Levine **Stephen Litton**: In memory of Gary Fingert

Karen Speicher: In memory of Dr. Gary Fingert and

Merlin

John Vernon: In memory of Gary Fingert

Derek & Pamela Willard: In memory of Gary Fingert

GARDEN FUND

Loretta Fingert: In memory of Bernice Corn

CEMETERY FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

Howard Levin: In memory of Lena C Dicker **Michael & Joanne Margolin**: In memory of

Lillian Margolin

FINE ARTS FUND

Loretta Fingert: In memory of Henry Corn

Sara Weisenberg: In memory of Samuel Levey

LIBRARY FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

PRAYERBOOK FUND

Charlotte Dvoretzky: In memory of

Edward Dvoretzky

RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

Loretta Fingert

Rody Gessner & Michelle Edwards: In memory of

Lillian Edwards

Alan Mutnick & Rachel Albrecht: In memory of

Benjamin Ross Mutnick

Bob & Donna Rodnitzky: In memory of

Ann Rodnitzky

Jonathan & Pamela Sabin: In memory of

Michael Allen Sabin

Jonathan & Susan Sabin: In memory of our parents

Nancy Sprince: In memory of Ben Sprince and

Belle Coster

PORTMAN PROGRAM FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons

Mark Graber & Hetty Hall: In memory of

George Elisha Hall

TIKUN OLAM FUND

Elliot & Jeanne Abrons: for Warm Up America

Kathy Ormond: In memory of Jacqueline F. Ormond Kathy Ormond: In memory of Waverly C. Ormond Stanley & Jane Zukin: In memory of Gary Fingert

SIM & SARAH STRAUSS FUND

David & Penny Strauss

Richard Strauss & Ellen Herman: In memory of

Sim Strauss, Belle Strauss & Rhea Posner

Stephen Strauss: In memory of Susan, Sim, and

Belle Strauss, Rhea Posner, and Marjorie Osdoba

FUNERAL COMMITTEE

Meredith Arkin: In memory of Gary Fingert

Neil & Naomi Arnold: In memory of Gary Fingert: Lillian/Berman Goldfarb, Liz/Butch Fishman

Nancy Kerensky: In memory of Gary Fingert

Doris & Herbert Weisman: For Fingert Meal of

Condolence



ONEG HOSTS NEEDED IN JANUARY!

We need your help with Friday night onegs!
The past 6 months we have enjoyed a wide variety of delicious onegs hosted by various congregants. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Having hosted onegs has built a sense of community and encouraged people to remain after services and chat, schmooze, and get to know each other.

We want to continue this tradition, but we need your help.



So far there is only one host signed up in 2024! If everyone is willing to host one oneg a year we will fill our calendar to overflowing. Please consider signing up to host an oneg.

It's easier than it sounds; a written guide is emailed with your sign-up confirmation, there is not much clean-up needed, and we are always available to help. Co-hosts are welcome, invite a friend to join you! If you are unable to physically attend services, you may also financially sponsor an oneg (minimum suggested donation is \$36) and the oneg committee will shop, set up, and clean up your oneg.

Please contact the office <u>secretary@agudasachimic.org</u>, Sue Weinberg <u>sueiniowa@gmail.com</u>, or Ari Levin <u>arielmlevin@gmail.com</u> with any questions.

Sign up here!

CONGREGATIONAL NEEDS FUNDRAISER

From time to time our congregation has needs that you may have a special passion for helping to provide to our space. In an effort to ensure our stability as a congregation, feel free to donate to these "smaller" important needs, as you are able. We will be noting our progress (transparently) each month to monitor where we are in reaching these goals! Note: \$2400 was previously in the Torah fund and is included here under Torah Repairs.



SCHOOL NEWS Sonja Spear

It was a mighty clash of the Hanukkah latkes and the Hanukkah . . . biscuits?

Logan's class was determined to make donuts out of Pillsbury biscuit dough. But before they could pop a can of dough, the adults took over the kitchen to make latkes for more than 100 people, a truly Maccabean feat! The resourceful children and their teacher shaped the dough into rounds, baked them, and filled them with jelly. And – nes gadol, a great miracle – they were totally passable as donuts. Hanukkah was saved! (Anyone wishing to turn this story into a Hallmark movie should contact my agent.)

A little improvisation keeps the school running, but some core principles hold us steady: teach Hebrew words in different contexts, teach Jewish values, allow for debate, and have fun.

For Hanukkah, we taught the kids the prayers for lighting Hanukkah candles. But we also returned to the word ner (candle), which occurs in the prayer, with the Israeli Hanukkah song Ner Li (I Have a Candle). Each kid pretended to strike a match and sang "adlik" (I light) using one thumb to represent neri (my candle). After some silly excursions into "I Had a Little Dreidel" (which slips one Yiddish word into the mix) and "Hanukkah O Hanukkah," the

freeze dance (a Rabbi Esther special), we launched into B'Tzelem Elohim (In the Image of God). It's a song that works for us on so many levels. It introduces a core Jewish value (human equality), references the story of creation, which we learned at the beginning of the year, and opens easily to a sophisticated discussion. (What do we owe other human beings if we are all created in the image of God? What about people we don't like or people who have hurt us? Do they count?) Also, the kids get so sing "yeah" as loud as they can.

I hope the songs stick with the kids during the break. We will return in January for the spring semester. It is easier to build momentum for learning. The spring is when we focus on more on learning tefilah (prayer) and sounding out Hebrew. We have already learned four prayers from the Kabbalat Shabbat service. We will learn four more and then host the parents on a Friday night.

Even though the spring semester has fewer holidays, they will still come very fast. Counted in Sundays, Purim is just around the corner.

I wonder if you can turn Pillsbury biscuits into Hamantaschen?

BOARD MINUTES

You can find minutes from our January board meeting at this link.

YIDDISH STUDY GROUP

The Yiddish Study Group meets Mondays and Fridays at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Contact the office for more information.

WEDNESDAY BOOK GROUP

The Wednesday book group will meet on January 24 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Contact the office for information.

SENIORS GROUP

Join us! As we welcome 2024, the Synagogue Seniors will gather together once again! Please mark your calendars for the next Synagogue Seniors event, **Thursday**, **January 18 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.** in the synagogue Social Hall. Professor Emerita Miriam Gilbert will present on "How Teaching Shakespeare at the University of Iowa has Informed My Life." Miriam began teaching at the UI in 1969 and has been teaching at the UI Senior College since 2002. She is well known for using dramatic readings and other performance techniques in the classroom. All seniors are welcome. **Please RSVP by Friday**, **January 12** so we can plan appropriately for brunch. Reserve your spot by emailing: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

Join Us! Agudas Achim Synagogue Seniors

THURSDAY January 18 11 AM TO 1 PM SOCIAL HALL

Welcome to 2024! Professor Emerita Miriam Gilbert will present on "How Teaching Shakespeare at the University of Iowa has Informed My Life." Miriam began teaching at the UI in 1969 and also has been teaching at the UI Senior College since 2002. She is well known for using dramatic readings and other performance techniques in the classroom. PLEASE RSVP BY FRIDAY, JANUARY 13 so we can plan appropriately for brunch. Reserve your spot by emailing: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

Coffee, Conversation, and a Nosh

- However you define "seniors" is up
 to you
- Bring a friend
- · Make a new friend
- Group meets third Thursday of the month
- To reserve your spot email: rsvp@agudasachimic.org

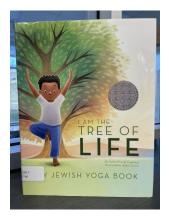
Jeanne Cadoret - Phyllis Petchers - Jane Zukin

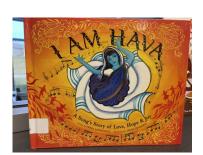


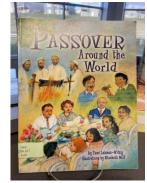
LIBRARY NEWS Teresa Weiner

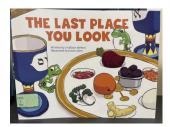
Look what's new for children!

Stop by soon to check out these books new to our children's collection and to browse through the hundreds of others there. The new books are displayed on top of the longest set of shelves, and the rest are shelved in sections for holidays, younger readers, older readers, and youth. Just put your name and your email address on the checkout card, put the card in a checkout card box, and have fun sharing our books with the young people in your life. It's the honor system— just return the books in a timely manner for others to check out next. The library is always open when the building is open, so come soon and often. Questions? Comments? Please email us— library@agudasachimic.org









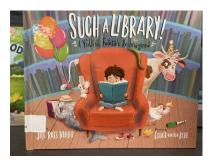












NOVEMBER SENIORS GROUP



In November, the Synagogue Seniors welcomed author and retired teacher David Schapira, grandson of one of Agudas Achim's founding families, who presented about his experiences serving in Vietnam.

SPIRITUAL JOURNALING FOR TU BISHVAT

Monday, January 22 at 6:00 p.m. at the synagogue

Join us for guided spiritual journaling for Tu BiShvat. Like our Elul journaling session, Corvin Greene will lead us through several journaling prompts inspired by the themes of the holiday of Tu BiShvat and Earthbased Judaism. No experience necessary. Bring writing materials with you.

LGBTQI+ GROUP SEEKS NEW COORDINATOR

Lisa Heineman had a blast being the inaugural coordinator of the LGBTQI+ group ... but she's taken on one or two or seventeen other duties & can no longer do justice to the job. We need a new coordinator.

This is your chance to help build community with a super fun group of people! If you'd like to know more about what's involved, contact Lisa at Lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com.

ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE NOTES Lisa Heineman

Happy Gregorian New Year from the Adult Education Committee!

Although Adult Ed could hardly compete with the amazing Hanukkah party & bazaar organized by the Social Committee, we enjoyed Doug Jones's session on the history of Hanukkah games. And we were especially grateful to have Dr. Barry Schreier lead a facilitated session on Israel. You'll find a report on that session elsewhere in the Bulletin, and we're exploring the possibility of future facilitated sessions.

In the meantime, planning for winter and spring is well underway. Several events are already on the calendar:

- January 28, 4:00 p.m. at FilmScene: Lisa Heineman will participate in a Q&A following a screening of The Zone of Interest to commemorate the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The film opens at FilmScene on January 27 and will run for several weeks. You can read more about the film here.
- **February 2**, **Oneg:** Kai Kaiser will speak about ICCSD's Free Lunch Program and hunger in Johnson County. This is joint programming with the Tikkun Olam Committee, which is contributing to the Free Lunch Program.
- April 8-10: Visit of Sephardic Studies experts to the University: Dr. Isaac Amon, Director of Academic Research & Program Development, Jewish Heritage Alliance, St. Louis, MO, and Dr. Jesus Jambrina, professor of Spanish, Viterbo University, founder of the Centro Isaac Campantón in Zamora, Spain. Details of public events will be forthcoming.
- June 7-8: Tikkun Leil Shavout all-night learning for Shavuot followed by a sunrise Shabbat service (Shavuot falls on June 11-12 this year)

In late January, we'll begin our classes on Biblical Hebrew, Torah reading, and study of Jewish texts. If you're interested and haven't yet signed up, please send Lisa an email ASAP: lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com.

Here's a sampling of other plans in the works. Be sure to open your weekly mailings for updates!

- Sessions on death and mourning by Rabbi Hugenholtz
- Spiritual journaling workshops for Tu B'Shvat, Purim, and Omer by Corvin Green
- A series on disability in Jewish life, following up on the "Hey Buddy, I'm Bill" exhibit at the UI Library last fall
- Curator-guided tours of Jewish interest at local museums, organized by Rachael Carlson
- A baking class by Charles Packard
- A report on her volunteer mission in Israel by Jayne Sandler
- An Oneg session on Iowa's Jewish history by Doug Jones
- A visit to the LGBTQI+ Library and Archive at the Close House in conjunction with Pride

If you have an idea for an Adult Ed event, please let us know. Send an email to lisa.heineman.1945@gmail.com or bend my ear when you see me in person.

BARRY SCHREIER TALK

A Circle of Trust: A Facilitated Discussion on the Middle East- by Naomi Greyser

On December 16, I joined 16 other participants in the synagogue library for a story circle and listening session on violence in the Middle East, facilitated by Dr. Barry Schreier. Dr. Schreier is a faculty member in the College of Education at the University of Iowa, and has a private practice in counseling psychology. He also has years of experience as a professional facilitator of discussions on challenging topics. My parents were visiting that weekend from the Boston area, and

my mom and I tentatively poked our heads into the conference room at Agudas Achim right at the hour. Candidly, I am rather conflict averse, yet was curious to think and listen with fellow congregants. Dr Schreier warmly welcomed all of us, and handed out a sheet with groundrules, coming out of Parker Palmer's Circle of Trust practice. These included confidentiality, as I

expected. They also included a commitment to actively listening, rather than "fixing, advising, saving or correcting" each other.

I had planned to sit by the door and slip out if things got intense, but Barry asked that we commit certain would not otherwise have been to remaining for the entire session if at all possible. present. This discussion was so welcome and My mom and I met eyes and joined others in agreeing to stay. We were glad that we did. I found myself moved by how attentively people listened to each other and the variety of stories that people shared – from observing the IDF from the vantage point of a US Marine, to hearing from children and grandchildren in Israel, to historical research on Zionism and Jews in the Middle East, to stories about a childhood in Israel and no longer feeling it is quite a place to call home.

I had been afraid things would get intense and I'd feel trapped around the table with my mom! However, people actively listened, and I felt privileged to hear everyone's reflections and stories. It is rare to listen to divergent and overlapping narratives in person with others – even rarer on such a tender topic. It felt compassionate and authentic and deeply respectful. Our reflections stretched longer than planned and, as we rounded out, fellow

> congregants David Roston and Frank Salomon turned warmly to each other. Laughing, they emphasized that they are a model of how people with diametrically opposed views on events in Israel and Gaza can be dear friends. I was inspired to ask if I could take their picture and they were glad to oblige.

Driving home, my mom and

I reflected on a long-ago trip to Israel, our trip colored by bleached stone, magenta bougainvillea, and green olive oil lapped over hummus. There was a plenitude to our back-and-forthing across two generations of American Jews that I feel modeled of how Agudas Achim acts not only as a "big tent" for people with divergent views, but also as a space where people can be in community with each other with care and respect. I am grateful to the organizers and participants for creating this circle. On the occasion of the solar calendar new year, I hope for many such opportunities to deepen our bonds through thoughtful, empathetic discussion, and for a peaceful 2024 for all.



DECEMBER SYNAGOGUE SUCCESSES







There were so many reasons and so many places to celebrate Hanukkah! Rabbi Esther was back at the Iowa City Public Library with Hanukkah Story Time, treating the kids to gelt, songs, stories and real burning (!) candles on the menorah.

The Intro to Judaism class also was in party-and-crafting mode with a Hanukkah party of their own. We had a potluck dinner with latkes and other delights and a craft-your-own-menorah session with beautiful, colorful times, hex nuts and a hot glue gun! A great time was had to all.

Sometimes, 'synagogue successes' don't take place at the synagogue. Last week, Pastor Tim Smith from Trinity Lutheran Church, Rev. Diana Smith of the Unitarian Universalist Society and the Rabbi spoke to the Coralville City Council about passing a Hate Crime Ordinance to protect our community from antisemitism and other forms of bigotry.



JANUARY 2024

Fri	5	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Sat	6	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sun	7	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
		Warm Up America	10:30 AM
		Mahjong Group	2:00 PM
Mon	8	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Intro Class	7:00 PM
Wed	10	Ritual Committee Meeting	7:30 PM
Thurs	11	Exec Meeting	5:30 PM
Fri	12	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM
Sat	13	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM
Sun	14	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM
		Sunday School	9:15 AM
		Shevat Yoga	2:00 PM
Mon	15	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
Thurs	18	Seniors Group	11:00 AM
		Board Meeting	7:00 PM
Fri	19	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM

Sat	20	Shabbat Morning Services	9:30 AM	
Sun	21	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	
		Sunday School	9:15 AM	
		Warm Up America	10:30 AM	
		Shevat Yoga	2:00 PM	
Mon	22	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	
		Tu BiShvat Journaling	6:00 PM	
		Intro Class	7:00 PM	
Wed	24	Free Lunch	11:30 AM	
		Wednesday Book Group	1:00 PM	
Fri	26	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	
		Shabbat Evening Services	7:00 PM	
Sat	27	New Member Morning Shabbat & Lunch	9:30 AM	
Sun	28	Talmud Study Group	9:00 AM	
		Sunday School	9:15 AM	
		Shevat Yoga	2:00 PM	
Mon	29	Yiddish Study Group	10:30 AM	
		Intro Class	7:00 PM	
Save The Date				
Sat	2/24	Rabbi Hugenholtz Honorary Luncheon		

SHEVAT YOGA

Shevat Yoga: Nurturing Self, Igniting Potential

In this four-session drop-in class, we focus on self-nurturing and realizing our potential as the winter days get a little shorter. We will come away from each gathering with a simple movement practice that we can add to our daily routine. Everyone is welcome. No previous Yoga experience necessary! Join us for as many sessions as you like.

Dates: Sundays 2:00-3:00 p.m. January 14 – February 4

Location: Agudas Achim Congregation

Optional, but nice to have: Yoga mat, large towel, or blanket

For more information: Leslea-collins@outlook.com



COVID COMMENTS+

Bob Wallace, Barcey Levy, & Jane Zukin

Note to the congregation: We are contining our COVID COMMENTS column because the COVID-19 virus and rlated illnesses are still with us, and are currently increasing. Because the problems have expanded in public health to other respiratory virus, we have changed the name of the column to "COVID COMMENTS+" to cover these events. We continue to appreciate your interest and understanding, and welcome questions and comments to: secretary@agudasachimic.org

The main news:

Covid-19 and the other respiratory viruses (influenza and RSV) are increasing now and are causing increasing hospitalizations. Please be sure you follow recommendations from CDC and your doctors' and other health professionals concerning maintaining your immunizations. These injections are still available at local pharmacies and grocery stories as well as the medical clinics you attend. Our recommendation for attending the synagogue have not changed, and we continue to take all precautions available.

Other news:

- New vaccines are being developed that are being administered by nasal sprays. This may be more acceptable to some people than needles.
- You may have read in the general meadia that many states are discarding or auctioning off their supplies
 of masks and other protective gear that have been used for protection from COVID-19 and other
 infections. If you have personal supplies, our suggestion is to hold on to for future problems that may
 arise. Of course, testing kids and any medices that you've saved have expiration dates that should be
 followed.

To your health!

WARM UP AMERICA

Thirty-Four: That's the number of afghans created by Warm Up America in 2023. Each afghan bore a label, stating that it was made and donated by friends and congregants of Agudas Achim.

These afghans contained roughly 1,650 of our 7" x 9" patches knitted/crocheted/crohooked in all-synthetic yarn by about 30 people from here to Minnesota. Afghans were designed during meetings, using the patches, then sewed and finished at home.



We thank everyone who helped Warm Up America, for their time, yarn, and funds for yarn. Truly, it takes a village to create an afghan -- or 34 of them in 2023. Interested in joining us? secretary@agudasachimic.org

We'll meet again on January 7th and 21st, 2024, 10:30 a.m. to noon, in the social hall. Join us? Contact the office for more info.

<u>Donate via Venmo;</u> <u>Donate via Paypal</u>

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