

Congregation Kehilat Shalom NEWS

A Welcoming Jewish Reconstructionist Community

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Newsletter of the Congregation Kehilat Shalom of Belle Mead, NJ **March 2008** Adar I – Adar II 5768

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President's Message

Purim customs include wearing masks and costumes while engaging in loud celebrations. Add in a festive meal and one has to wonder about the roots of Halloween parties. Of course there are differences. What would Purim be without the reading of the Megillah and drowning out Haman's name with a grogger or other loud noisemakers?



While fun festive activities surround Purim, there is another tradition one can partake during this time of year: providing to those less fortunate. While we all usually give monetary gifts for Tzedakah year round, during Purim we highlight the giving of the gift of food.

There are many opportunities to fulfill this mitzvah. Do you know of someone that could use a meal cooked for them? Does your town have a food pantry to which you can donate non-perishables? Our congregants come from diverse townships, and many operate food pantries. Some examples are Plainsboro, Hillsborough, Franklin and the Food Bank Network of Somerset County in Bridgewater. CKS's home Montgomery Township anticipates opening of their food pantry by the beginning of April.

Enjoy dressing up for Purim. Be loud and boisterous in celebration. And if you can, help those who might not be able to help themselves. Please give the gift of food.

HOLD THE DATE

For An Important and Joyous Event
In this 25th Year of Congregation Kehilat Shalom

Please mark your calendars to attend the Installation Ceremony of Rabbi Susan Falk on Friday, April 25th at 7:30 PM. This special service will include renowned scholar and speaker Rabbi Jacob Staub of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College as well as performances by Kol Ahava and our Children's Choir. The joyfulness of the occasion will be multiplied by the unveiling of a special plaque honoring 25 years of service and dedication by the past presidents of the temple.

Members of the community-at-large, including local clergy and mayors, have been invited, so this is an opportunity for us to show the greater Montgomery area into our wonderful home as we celebrate Rabbi Susan's appointment.

A formal invitation will be forthcoming. Volunteers and donations are needed to help with this event. To volunteer, contribute or ask questions, please contact Holly Grace Nelson (hollygracenelson@verizon.net).

Progressive Dinner

The weather was cold but hearts were warm at the Tu B'Shevat Progressive Dinner held on January 19th. Delicious appetizers were served at Sharon Underberg-Davis' home where folks got to meet and get to know each other and catch up with old friends. Next stop were the main course dinner homes where everyone participated in a Tu B'Shevat seder and partook of the delicious entrees that were prepared by the dinner hosts. Last stop was the Kent home where yummy desserts were served along with the distribution of special prizes and more wonderful conversation.



Thanks to everyone who volunteered their homes, prepared food, and shopped. The evening wouldn't have been so successful without your generosity. Make sure that you don't miss our next one!!

CKS Donations

CKS gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our members and friends.

Brick Walkway

Meryl Bisberg and Dane Cochran

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Jeanne and Norman Schechter


In Memory of Frances Schwartzberg

Lisa Kent

Natalie London and Richard Yuresko

In Memory of Meyer London

In Memory of Thoraya Albarella



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Pre Season Softball Tournament

Sunday, April 6th

Warren Park - Woodbridge, N.J.

8:30AM until completion (roughly 3PM)

Congregation Kehilat Shalom is looking for a few good men that are interested in participating in a day of sports, fun and community building. Must be 18 years or older however 17 year olds are eligible as long as a parent is present.

If you have that athletic competitive drive, or believe that you still do and wish to participate or have any questions -contact mensclub@ksnj.org [<mailto:mensclub@ksnj.org>] ASAP.

The event is hosted by Congregation Beth El of Edison, a member of the Greater Middlesex Jewish Federation Softball League. They will take the first 8 synagogues that respond to their invitation. CKS will only participate if we have enough players to field a team and our response is before the tournament fills up.

Kabbalah, Heresy or Tradition?
Exploring the mystical texts of Judaism
Sunday, March 9, 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m. (during first session Hebrew School)
First of a two-part series—don't miss this event!
Come, listen, learn, share, bring a friend!
Material fee and café:
\$3.00 members
\$5.00 non-members
Sponsored by the CKS Adult Education Committee
Presented by Rabbi Susan Falk

Invitations by Sharon

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CKS Book Club

All book club meetings will be at the hosts' home:



March 17: Don't Let's Go To The Dogs Tonight by Alexandra Fuller. Hosted at the home of Marilyn Plotkin. Please RSVP to Marilyn if you will be there.


All temple members are welcome if you have read the book or not.

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ROBERT "BOB" FASS
SALES REPRESENTATIVE

THE POWER OF PURIM



Purim is, without question, our most raucous of holidays. Based on the book of Esther, Purim is a retelling of a story filled with bawdy sexual jokes and slapstick comedy, murderous violence, and sudden reversals of fortune. In this topsy-turvy world, up becomes down and first becomes last as Esther, Mordechai, and the Persian Jews are saved at the eleventh hour from the brink of annihilation, and Haman, the evil Vizier, is hanged. During the holiday, children wear costumes and spin groggers or noisemakers. Adults, too, partake of the carnival atmosphere, often by acting out humorous Purim skits or even scathing burlesques on current events known as purimspiels.

While the veracity of the Book of Esther is highly questionable, nevertheless, the ancient Rabbis admitted it into the Biblical canon – even with all of its unsavory material. Chances are the story of Esther is a fantasy, a springtime escape-valve for an exiled and subjugated people. The Rabbis, however, promoted this “Spring fever” celebration, urging people to become so drunk that they could no longer tell the difference between *Baruch Mordechai*/Blessed Mordechai and *Arrur Haman*/Cursed Haman.

As if to add to all these reversals, as well as to this pointed confusion between good and evil, the Jewish mystics, using *gematria* (the technique of assigning each Hebrew letter a number and then adding up the numeric values of different words), determined that the letters of *Baruch Mordechai* and *Arrur Haman* add up to the same number. In this way, two polar opposites, good and evil, become one and the same.

Is this a laughing matter or is it the highest form of heresy? Indeed, it is this mixing of opposites that may be the most convincing of the critiques warning against Jewish mysticism. That is, in a system in which all is One and God is all, how do we distinguish between good and evil?

Perhaps this is the power of Purim, the holiday that forces us to look at the extremes of life, and hopefully, at everything in between – the holiday that forces us to stretch out like our reflection in the mirror in the funhouse and then laugh at our own foibles.

This March, come and explore the ethical dilemmas posed by Jewish mysticism and much more as we begin our second adult education series, “Jewish Mysticism: Tradition or Heresy?” beginning on Sunday March 9th at 9 AM. Then, come on down to our riotous Purim celebration on March 20th at 7 PM. Take off your inhibitions, put on a costume, bring the kids – and don’t forget the schnapps! See you then.

B'Shalom,

Rabbi Susan



Kindercapers

Now in its 14th full year, the JCCBM's non-sectarian pre-school for children 2-1/2 to 5 years old, offers a unique atmosphere, giving children a chance to explore, create, and, most importantly, learn to think and reason.

For more information, call 908 359-0160.



The CK& Gift Shop is open each Sunday 10 am - 11 am

Questions?
Susan Waskow 609-333-1113
or Harlene Rosenberg 908-874-8283




Tree of Life

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Contact Shelley Nord 908-874-8464



Hebrew School Happenings



March

- 2 Sunday Mock Shabbat K-4
- 5 Wednesday music cooking
- 9 Sunday music cooking
- 12 Wednesday art
- 16 Sunday art Mock Shabbat 5/6
- 19 Wednesday music- Interview of a Jewish Life with the Fifth Grade class and Empty Nesters 5-7PM

- 23 Sunday – No Class Spring recess
- 26 Wednesday- No Class Spring Recess
- 30 Sunday-No Class- Spring Recess



The end of January brought Tu B'shvat and preparations for the Tu B'shvat Seder. The K-2 class made trees out of recycled materials and listened to many great stories about trees and Tu B'shvat. The Sixth graders prepared for and presented during the Seder. Toran, Ilana Berger, looked on and helped students design posters for the Seder. Toran, Jeremy Billotti and parents George Cohen, Jodi Meisner, Carrie Fischman, Gayle Holtzman, Leslie



Kowalski, Iris Rubinstein, and Herb Milich helped to prepare and serve fruit, and pour the four glasses of grape juice. All sixth graders' parents donated the food and juice as well as Iris Rubinstein, Leslie Kowalski, and Herb Milich.

I would also like to thank Devora Haeber for purchasing the challah and Juice for Mock Shabbat on 1/23.

Arielle Starkman came in to help the Sixth Graders make puppets for their Famous Person project.

Robynn Mann and the fifth grade did a wonderful job marrying two stuffed bears. The entire School got to watch and enjoy the party afterwards.

The K-4 Shabbat morning service and the K-4 evening service went very well. There was a great turn out and everyone enjoyed good food, a spiritually uplifting service, and each other's good company.

Dori

Shabbat Superstars on page 6



HEBREW HIGH SCHOOL



Save these important dates:

April 18 - Friday evening **Shabbat services led by Hebrew High School students**

May 9 - Friday evening Shabbat services and **ceremony for graduating Hebrew High School seniors**

January and February were packed with interesting discussions for the Wednesday and Thursday Hebrew High School. Once again our congregant volunteers led discussions on a variety of topics including Superheroes and Judaism, Similarities and Difference in governments, the formation of Israel, ethics, Jewish entertainers, and this year's Presidential candidates.

Here are descriptions from some of our volunteers:

From Jeremy Lerner w/the Thursday class: "Jeremy and the HHS kids had an active discussion on the "Similarities and differences" between US, Israeli, and British government systems. The consensus clearly indicated that the definition of a democracy was fluid and that there were pros and cons to each. The class was surprised that the British monarch still held actual power, even if not exercised. There was general agreement that the US electoral system was an obsolete holdover from a past era, and should be abolished. As always, leading the class was a pleasure, and I strongly recommend other congregants to be involved in HHS activities!"

From Matt Rosenthal w/the Wednesday and Thursday class: "Superheroes and Judaism. The class stage was set by informing the group that the majority of iconic American Superheroes were created by Jewish writers and artists such as Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, Bob Kane (Kahn), Jack Kirby (Jacob Kurtzberg) and Joe Simon and Stan Lee (Stanley Leiber). As a group we focused on Superman, Batman, Captain America, The Fantastic Four, The Hulk, Spider-Man and the X-Men. We drew parallels to Jewish symbolism as well as Jewish text that helped form the characters by their creators. Some examples discussed included Superman's journey to earth in a rocket ship to Moses trip down the Nile in a basket, the "Jewish" meaning of his Kryptonian name Kal-El and his powerful symbol of assimilation; Batman's vigilantism to Moses killing of an Egyptian taskmaster and the Batcave; Captain America's shield and star within it to the Magen David or Shield of David, the number four being prevalent within many things within Passover; the comparison between the Incredible Hulk and the mystical Golem of Prague; Spider-Man (not to mention other heroes) identity completely hidden by a mask being a metaphor for Tzakah given with complete anonymity being the greatest level of charity; and the X-Men persecuted for being mutants experiencing hatred and bigotry just like the Jewish people for simply being different."

From Larry Spinrad w/the Wednesday group: "On Wednesday, January 23rd, Larry Spinrad led a discussion with the Hebrew High School students about Jewish people in the field of entertainment. It was a lively discussion in which everyone participated and seemed to both enjoy and learn."

Sue Krisiloff was on hand with the Thursday group to discuss various ethical issues. Thanks for continuing this important dialogue.

Lisa Kent led rousing discussions on two successive weeks for the Wednesday class. The first week was dedicated to learning about the formation of Israel and the second week focused on the Presidential candidates with respect to issues of importance to Jews. Lisa's formation of Israel class began with a pre-test asking the students some basic questions about Israel such as, "What year did Israel become a state? Who controlled Israel prior to statehood? List two countries that supported statehood, two countries opposed. Who was the first Prime Minister?" At the end of the session each student knew the answer to these questions and more. The class was separated into groups of 2-3 students. Each group was given an article to summarize, asked to create a poster of the material and then present to the whole group.

The second week **Lisa** asked the students to again split into groups. This week each group was to read about one of the Presidential candidates and discuss what issues would be important to Jews. Then one person from each group addressed the class as that candidate. Everyone learned a bit about each candidate and had a lot of fun in the process.

Rabbi Susan worked with the students on a variety of topics. She writes: With Wednesday class- We studied Israel's Declaration of Independence. Last session I brought in my tefillin and we talked about how to use them, all the symbolism involved with wearing them, as well as a demonstration of how to put them on. Susan Waskow and I led a couple of sessions of "the Ethics of War Conduct". With the Thursday group -We had two sessions on the development of Jewish liturgical music, specifically Salamone di Rossi in the late Renaissance and then another session on 19th Century musical developments of the early Reform movement. (We actually listened to music during these sessions in addition to the background info). I also did a session on tefillin with this group.

Makes you want to join Hebrew High School, doesn't it?

Many, many thanks to all our adult volunteers who generously give of their time to the students in Hebrew High School.

Shalom, *Karen Fridkis*, Hebrew High School chair

CKS YOUTH GROUP

Our youth group met in February for an evening of bowling at Tenpin Lanes in Manville. A good time was had by all as the group bowled side by side in two teams. It doesn't sound like there were any teen champions in the making during the evening's game, but that didn't stop anyone from having a fun time. Pizza and unlimited soda rounded out the evening. Many thanks to chaperones Barbara and Tom Berger for reserving the lanes and for sticking around to bowl with the teens. Rumor has it that Barbara Berger was the night's top scoring bowler. Way to go, Barbara!

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday evening, March 8 - Event to be announced. Email me with your suggestions.

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday evening, April 26 - TBA

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday evening, May 10 - TBA

SAVE THE DATE: Sunday afternoon, June 22 - Canoe trip

REGIONAL RECONSTRUCTIONIST YOUTH GROUP

February found the regional group in Trenton at Homefront for a community service project. Wendy from Homefront thanked the participating teens with the following, "If you come into the CTC room this week and smell the odor of cleansers, that's because we had our own personal "cleaning service". A group of high school youth from 4 local synagogues came for 3 hours on Sunday and cleaned the room from top to bottom. They even attempted to put our last computer together and were doing fine until they found they were missing a major piece! I regret that I did not get their full names, but if you know any youth from String of Pearls, Beth Chaim, Temple B'nai Abraham or Kehilat Shalom, give them a hug and a big thanks that they worked so hard to sanitize our preschool during this especially "germy" time of year!"

The leaders met to at the monthly meeting in Princeton to discuss plans for the future. Be sure to mark your calendar with the upcoming events.

All group activities are open to any post b'nai mitzvah teen. Come and join the fun!

February 23rd—Rollerskating

March 1st-- "The Flood"-- Musical at 185 Nassau

March 4th-- Leader Meeting

March 15th-- Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Environmental Project

March 29th-- Shul-in at CKS

April Leader Meeting date to be announced

April to be announced

May 3rd-- Hike in the Sourland Mountain area

May 17th-- Senior end of the year party

Shalom, *Karen Fridkis*,

Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center

Somerset * Hunterdon * Warren Counties



Upcoming Events...

Purim at Central NJ Jewish Home for the Aged

When: Sunday, March 9, 2008, 2:00-3:00 PM

Where: Central New Jersey Home for the Aged, 380 Demott Lane, Somerset

Ohr Tikvah is sponsoring a Purim celebration for residents of Central New Jersey Home for the Aged. We will distribute Purim cards made by community religious school students. Please call Ohr Tikvah if you can help make cards, and want to help distribute cards and gift bags to residents.

Hebrew Chanting Circle in Celebration of Pesach

When: Thursday, April 10, 2008, 7:30 to 9:00 PM

Where: Temple Sholom, 594 N. Bridge Street, Bridgewater

Fee: \$5.00 donation

Come join our chanting circle that uses sacred Hebrew phrases to promote the healing of our souls (*Tikkun Ha'Nefesh*) as we strive to contribute to healing our world (*Tikkun Olam*). Hebrew is a sacred vibrational language, and the repetition of a sacred phrase can clear the mind of clutter and create a sense of inner peace and wholeness. This month we will learn chants that connect us to the Festival of Freedom. No prior knowledge of singing, chanting, or Hebrew language is necessary.

Living Hopefully with Illness and Physical Challenges

Ohr Tikvah is starting a support group for individuals living with chronic illness and physical challenges. Co-led by Rabbi Robin Nafshi and a social worker, the group will provide a safe environment to share personal stories, to laugh and maybe cry, and to learn from Jewish text and traditions how to live life fully in the face of adversity. A minimum of eight people is needed to launch the group. Please call Ohr Tikvah if you are interested in participating.



Jewish LIFE presents Dr. Murray Spiegel, author of *300 Ways to Ask the Four Questions*, Thursday, March 13th, 7 p.m. at Or Chadash in Flemington. (Or Chadash is located at 149 Foothill Road, Flemington. 908-806-2122.) Jewish LIFE and Ohr Tikvah Jewish Healing Center are pleased to co-sponsor *The Wounding and Healing of the Human Spirit* with Dr. Dan Gottlieb. This program will be held Thursday, April 3rd at 7 p.m. at the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum JCC, 775 Talamini Road in Bridgewater. Please register in advance by calling the JCC at 908-725-6994 x201. **Save the date for Yom Hashoah Observance** on Sunday, May 4th, **Yom Ha'Atzmaut Celebration** Thursday, May 8th; and **Salute to Israel Parade/Dinner** on Sunday, June 1st. More details to come! The Jewish LIFE brochure is posted at www.ssbjcc.org

"Building Jerusalem

One LEGO At A Time"

Belle Mead, NJ

- Congregation Kehilat Shalom invites the community to a special family event "Building Jerusalem One LEGO At A Time" on Sunday, May 18, 2008 from 9:30-11:30 am at Congregation Kehilat Shalom.



Participants will be building a 400 square foot model of Jerusalem using 60,000 LEGO building blocks. The final structure will include the walls around the entire Old City, the Kotel, the Second Temple, all of the gates into the city, David's Tower, the Montifiore Windmill and many buildings within the walls of the city. This special program will be led by Stephen W. Schwartz, Architect from Livingston, New Jersey.

"This is a wonderful family event that includes children, parents, grandparents and great grandparents who are building all together," says Matt

Rosenthal, President of Congregation Kehilat Shalom.

Fee is \$5 per person (maximum of \$15 per family); children under 8 yrs participate for free. Cost includes breakfast and a family LEGO brick for the Kotel.

To register, please contact Robin R. Bengochea, Community Engagement Coordinator for Congregation Kehilat Shalom at 908-359-0420.

December-January Shabbat Superstars

December

Nicole Schaum
Scott Weitze
Jason Weitze
Jack Weitze
Dorothy Waskow
Nancy Weiss
Dorothy Weiss
Tess Kowalski

January 4

Zachary Burke
Jason Rosenthal
Lea Goldhammer
Ben Weinstein
Cecily Weinstein
Joanna Javeline
Melissa Javeline

January 12

Jason Weitze
Scott Weitze
Jack Weitze
Cory Cochran
Jeremy Orlando
Ian Murphy
Jason Rosenthal
Allison Rosenthal
Ben Applegate
Jackie Sokel
Gabrielle Rubinstein
Justin Corsan
Derek Dalpe
Dorothy Weiss
Nancy Weiss
Emma Cohen
Jon Kaufmann
Emily Gartenberg
Jacob Fischman

May 8, 2008 - 5:00 - 8:00 PM Israel at 60 - Community Yom HaAtzmaut Community Celebration

Hosted by the Flemington Jewish Community Center
Sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Somerset, Hunterdon and Warren Counties and Local Area Synagogues

Music, featuring our own **Kol Ahava** vocal ensemble dancing, Israeli food, crafts, speakers, film and much, much more!
Additional information to come.

MARCH 2008

March 2008
24 Adar I 5768 - 24 Adar II 5768

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 ^{24 Adar I} 6:31AM/5:51PM Vayakhel: Exo. 35.1-36.7. I Kings 7.40-50. Regional Youth Group - "The Flood" - musical at 185 Nassau
2 ^{25 Adar I} 6:29AM/5:53PM Hebrew School B'nei Mitzvah Family Meeting - 9:00	3 ^{26 Adar I} 6:28AM/5:54PM	4 ^{27 Adar I} 6:26AM/5:55PM 5:00 PM Regional Youth Leaders Meeting - Princeton	5 ^{28 Adar I} 6:25AM/5:56PM Hebrew School 5 - 7 PM Hebrew High School 7:15 PM Education Committee Meeting	6 ^{29 Adar I} 6:23AM/5:57PM 5-7 PM Hebrew High School	7 ^{30 Adar I} 6:22AM/5:58PM ROSH HODESH I Num. 28.1-15. Family Shabbat Services - 7:00 pm	8 ^{1 Adar II} 6:20AM/5:59PM ROSH HODESH II Pekude: Exo. 38.21-40.38. Num. 28.9-15. Isaiah 66.1-24. Shabbat Shekalim Exo. 30.11-16. II Kings 12.1-17. CKS Youth Group Evening Event
9 ^{2 Adar II} 7:18AM/7:00PM Hebrew School 9:00 - 10:30 AM Adult Education - "Kaballah, Tradition or Hearasy?"	10 ^{3 Adar II} 7:17AM/7:01PM	11 ^{4 Adar II} 7:15AM/7:02PM 7:30 PM Board of Trustees Meeting	12 ^{5 Adar II} 7:14AM/7:04PM Hebrew School 5-7 PM Hebrew High School	13 ^{6 Adar II} 7:12AM/7:05PM 5-7 PM Hebrew High School	14 ^{7 Adar II} 7:10AM/7:06PM Shabbat Services - 7:45 pm	15 ^{8 Adar II} 7:09AM/7:07PM Vayikra: Levit. 1.1-3:5. Shabbat Zakhor Deut. 25.17-19. I Samuel 15.2-34. 9:30 am - Emily Gartenberg Bat Mitzvah
16 ^{9 Adar II} 7:07AM/7:08PM Hebrew School	17 ^{10 Adar II} 7:06AM/7:09PM 7:30 PM CKS Book Club Meeting - Home of Marilyn Plotkin	18 ^{11 Adar II} 7:04AM/7:10PM	19 ^{12 Adar II} 7:02AM/7:11PM Hebrew School 5-7 PM Hebrew High School	20 ^{13 Adar II} 7:01AM/7:12PM FAST OF ESTHER Morning: Exo. 32.11-14, 34.1-10. Afternoon: Exo. 32.11-14, 34.1-10. Afternoon: Isaiah 55.6-56.8. 7:00 PM Purim Celebration 5-7 PM Hebrew High School	21 ^{14 Adar II} 6:59AM/7:13PM PURIM Exo. 17.8-16. Shabbat Services - 7:00 pm	22 ^{15 Adar II} 6:57AM/7:14PM SHUSHAN PURIM Tzav: Levit. 6.1-7:10. Jeremiah 7.21-8.3, 9.22-23.
23 ^{16 Adar II} 6:56AM/7:15PM NO HEBREW SCHOOL	24 ^{17 Adar II} 6:54AM/7:16PM	25 ^{18 Adar II} 6:52AM/7:17PM 7:30 PM Religion Committee Meeting	26 ^{19 Adar II} 6:51AM/7:18PM NO HEBREW SCHOOL	27 ^{20 Adar II} 6:49AM/7:19PM	28 ^{21 Adar II} 6:47AM/7:20PM Shabbat Services - 7:45 pm	29 ^{22 Adar II} 6:46AM/7:21PM Shemini: Levit. 9.1-10:7. Shabbat Parah Num. 19.1-22. Ezekiel 36.16-38. Regional Youth Group Event - Shul-in at CKS
30 ^{23 Adar II} 6:44AM/7:22PM NO HEBREW SCHOOL	31 ^{24 Adar II} 6:43AM/7:23PM					

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Building/Grounds/Décor	Andy Sokel- 609-466-8749 andsok@aol.com
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Life Cycle (Caring for each other)	Sheryl Rosenberg- 908-253-7049 swellcourt@verizon.net
Long Range Planning	Joseph Weiss josephhobartweiss@verizon.net
Membership	Jeremy Lerner 908-904-0228 Leslie Kowalski 609-275-4644
Men's Club	Eric Applegate 908-904-0457
Pastoral Emergencies	Rabbi Susan Falk 908-359-0420
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