**Congregation Shalom**

**Highlights from Our Year**

**2018 – 2019**

**Worship/Spirituality/Life Cycle**

* Since early September, Congregation Shalom has hosted 51 Shabbat Eve worship experiences for members of all ages including monthly Family Shabbat services, five Tot Shabbat services, two Torah Tots, Sunset Shabbats, and other Shabbat events.
* Congregation Shalom provided a full range of High Holidays services this year including a Selichot program/service, children’s services, second day Rosh HaShanah service, study programs, and Yizkor.
* The community marked the major Jewish holidays including special moments like opening the entire Torah during Simchat Torah and meaningful Yizkor services throughout the year so that members could honor loved ones.
* After the shooting at Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life synagogue, Congregation Shalom hosted a Solidarity Shabbat attended by over 300 people, including representatives from 15 local interfaith groups, Chelmsford’s police chief and school superintendent, and many community members.
* Our 52nd Annual 2nd Seder was held for 80 people, including members and their families and friends.
* Congregation Shalom participated in the HIAS National Refugee Shabbat, and included a storyteller from Suitcase Stories®.
* Music continued to be an important part of our spiritual experiences in the congregation. We had inspiring musical leadership from Sue Horowitz and Ari Strasser, and the return of Meryl Atlas to lead music during the High Holidays. Our members who are involved in Shpiel, Harmoniyah, and Fireside Quartet also generously enriched our services with music.
* Live streaming has been a success in our community providing opportunities for many people to participate in our worship experiences. Since September, there have been 499 unique views to our live streaming, 13,697 total views, and 418 hours consumed!
* There have been conversions, baby naming ceremonies, brises, 14 B’nai Mitzvah services, 6 students consecrated, 1 student confirmed, and 6 students graduating from our Chai program who are now off to college.
* The Congregation Shalom community has also mourned with many of our members, supporting them through the grief process, participating in shivah services, and providing rabbinic services for funerals.
* Several members of our community have had the joy of having children married. Rabbi Perry has officiated at some of these weddings and helped support couples and parents whose weddings were or will be in distant locations.

**Youth/School**

* Our religious school, 100 students in grades pre-K-12, included 9 different Family Education events.
* At our Siyyum HaSefer ceremony in the spring, 10 3rd grade students received beautifully covered siddurim (prayerbooks).
* There were 6 class Shabbat dinners that were all home-made and wonderfully received. The food was great and the cost was more affordable for families.
* In the realm of extra-curricular activities, the school saw the creation of a new Student Theater Group in which 18 students performed in two plays. We also saw a return of Kol Kolot, our children’s choir, which was directed by volunteer parents with madrich piano accompaniment. About 10 students participated in singing at the Teacher Appreciation Shabbat and the last day of Sunday school.
* The Red Nose Day Foundation was the recipient of this year’s school tzedakah. The students and teachers enthusiastically threw themselves into the effort and raised over $1100 through giving in class as well as through food and drink sales in the school. On the last day of school there was a community-wide celebration of the school’s achievements including music, class presentations, and more.
* The school once again hosted its annual Channukah party which involves children, parents, and grandparents. During the event, everyone had the chance to dance to professionally DJ’d music, eat great food, and participate in a meaningful social action project. In the spring, the school hosted its annual Purim Shpiel which was written and performed by our Rabbi and school staff.
* With the help of two of our members, the music program in the school was re-fashioned and launched in a successful way. This culminated on the final day of school with a wonderful integration of music into the final event of the year.
* The Chai school once again had a successful cooking inter-session program, but this year it was expertly taught by a student!
* Shalomite teens once again had a hugely successful year! Among the highlights:
* Hosted a fundraiser dinner party for nearly 100 people and raised $2500 for the Red Nose Foundation. The teens cooked all of the desserts, provided amazing jazz music, hosted the tables, provided affordable baby-sitting, and more!
* Once again had a fun ski trip to the White Mountains with over 20 kids participating.
* Led a meaningful Creative Shabbat service and program including a pot-luck dinner for the entire congregation.
* Continued to be actively involved in NFTY-Northeast and one of the Shalomites served on the regional board.

**Adult Education/Programming**

* This year the Adult Education Offerings provided a range of diverse learning opportunities for our congregants and the broader community.
* Showing of “Complicit: The Untold Story of Why the Roosevelt Administration Denied Safe Harbor to Jewish Refugees” with guest speaker, survivor of the ship, Hans Fischer.
* Kristalnacht Commemoration Concert – “The Mischlinge Expose: A Concert” with Classical Pianist Carolyn Enger.
* A presentation by Professor Bob Forrant, from UMass Lowell, about Jewish immigration into the Lowell community.
* Cemeteries Are For the Living – A Virtual Tour with Lisa Berenson from JCAM.
* Sermon in Song with Rabbi Deborah Zecher.
* Written In Breath, a Yiddish Song presentation by Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russel.
* Workshop presented by Facing History Facing Ourselves about the rise of anti-Semitism after Charlottesville.
* There was also a continuation of on-going Adult Education classes which included 6 Torah studies, Adult Hebrew, monthly Café Wisdom, and our Spirituality group.

**Tikkun Olam/Social Justice**

* Our Social Action/Justice committee had a fall event about Question 3, a ballot question on equal rights for transgender citizens in Massachusetts. The program was hosted by Kelly Jenkins, a transgender woman and activist who lives and works in the state.
* The committee, working with the League of Women Voters, provided a pivotal role in bringing the final 3rd Congressional District Candidates Debate to Chelmsford, which was attended by 800 voters.
* Members of the congregation continued their work on criminal justice reform and participated in the What a Difference a DA Makes program.
* The committee hosted its second annual One Book Discussion with participation from our members and the wider inter-faith community. This year we read the book Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist by Eli Saslow. The program was led by a staff member of the New England ACLU.
* Over 30 members of our community participated in a solidarity ceremony in support of members of the Muslim community in Billerica after the shooting at a Mosque in New Zealand.
* Members of the committee helped to register 800 new American citizens to vote at their Naturalization ceremony in Lowell.
* Five members of the committee traveled to Washington, DC to participate in the Reform Movement’s Consultation on Conscience conference and lobbied on Capitol Hill.
* Finally, and equally importantly, the Social Action/Justice Committee remains actively involved in community service needs including gathering meals for food banks, donating meals to the Lowell Transitional Shelter, Christmas meals for seniors, clothing drives, blood drives, and collecting Halloween candy for soldiers serving overseas.

**Sisterhood/Brotherhood**

* The Sisterhood and Brotherhood each hosted successful retreats this year. The Sisterhood, which was celebrating its 20th retreat, traveled to Portsmouth, NH. Forty women joined in prayer, song, study, friendship, laughter, and more. The theme of the retreat was Putting ART in the ToRAh. A beautiful triptych was created and now hangs in the synagogue lobby and a special Sisterhood Torah cover containing messages from our Sisterhood members was fashioned by Sisterhood members. The Brotherhood travelled to the Cape in May to once again enjoy a fun weekend filled with outdoor activities, food, friendship, and more.
* The Sisterhood spent much of the year brainstorming how to create a new leadership structure that would help it flourish as synagogue dynamics change.
* The Brotherhood once again made generous contributions to the community’s life with their yearly set-up and break-down of the Sukkah and cooking latkes for the school.
* Both Brotherhood and Sisterhood continued to provide many, many social opportunities for their members including dinners, barbecues, poker nights, cooking experiences, walks, Passover shopping trips, and more.

**Community/Governance**

* The synagogue’s Board made the commitment to help our members participate more fully in synagogue governance and provided virtual participation opportunities for the temple’s annual meeting and special meetings. Participation includes, for the first time, the ability to vote virtually.
* The lay leadership of the synagogue continues to study and address the changing dynamics of congregational life in America in the 21st century and has attempted to adapt and change programming and staffing to reflect these trends.
* A Dues Task Force was set up in 2018 and continued its important work in 2019 to address the challenges presented by our current dues system. In addition to a large committee effort, many public events were held for the entire congregation and virtual participation was included.
* The Board continues to provide important leadership in the realm of up-dating our Bylaws.
* With the understanding that our members cannot continue to provide all the funds needed to support our congregation, the Board has begun to invest resources and expertise into developing additional revenue streams for the congregation.
* A new Security Committee has been established and has made great progress in reviewing our congregation’s security procedures, making plans for hardening our building, and working with town officials and police to ensure that our synagogue is following best practices for security.
* Our Communication Committee completely overhauled our communication vehicles with a new and beautifully designed web-site, Weekly Updates, and a monthly Keeping Connected. We have also begun to more actively use Facebook and external press releases to connect with the broader community.
* The House Committee made significant changes in the infrastructure of our synagogue including upgraded kitchen facilities, new upgrades to our heating system and thermostats, beautiful landscaping, and more.
* Finally, the congregation hosted an evening in May to honor Rabbi Perry’s 20 years at Congregation Shalom. The event was attended by over 150 members and friends. It was a wonderful evening for the entire community and provided much enjoyed social time for our members. It was an evening of food, music, fun, and friendship.