

# Congregation Beth Israel

## New Member Information Packet



### Introduction

#### **Welcome! We Are Glad You Are Here!**

Congregation Beth Israel encourages our members to become active participants in the life of our synagogue. Non-Jewish family members are welcome and encouraged to participate fully. Currently, our membership includes more than 250 families – mostly from Whatcom, Skagit and Island counties. We are a Reform congregation, affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ).

Our congregation, under the spiritual guidance of Rabbi Joshua Samuels, offers weekly Friday night Shabbat services, twice monthly Saturday morning Shabbat services, a monthly Tot Shabbat service, weekly Torah study sessions and ritual observance of all Jewish holidays throughout the year. All are welcome to attend.

Each year Congregation Beth Israel hosts celebrations for the wider community at Passover, Purim and Hanukkah. We also host guest speakers, visiting scholars, authors, performers and other events. Everyone is welcome at these events.

*Among the benefits of your Congregation Beth Israel membership are:*

- Becoming part of and supporting a vibrant, diverse and growing Jewish community with a rich history of more than 100 years.
- Having a spiritual home for observing Shabbat, Jewish holidays and life cycle events.
- Complimentary High Holy Day tickets.
- Learning and socializing through programs, adult education classes, and Beth Israel's many committees.
- Keeping up to date on synagogue events and activities by receiving *The Shul Shofar*, our weekly E-newsletter The Timbrel, and access to the members-only section of our website, [bethisraelbellingham.org](http://bethisraelbellingham.org).
- Member pricing in Congregation Beth Israel's Keshet Center for Jewish Learning (birth - 18 years), and tuition scholarships as needed.
- Access to Bar or Bat Mitzvah training for boys and girls coming of age, and for adults.
- Access to our teen youth group.

We look forward to your participation with us in all of these things. By joining Congregation Beth Israel you are contributing to our Jewish heritage that is more than 5,700 years old.



## **Rabbi Joshua Samuels**

Congregation Beth Israel welcomed Rabbi Joshua Samuels as its spiritual leader in July 2012.

Rabbi Samuels previously served Temple Beth Hillel in the Los Angeles area. During his tenure there, Samuels enjoyed teaching adult education courses, organizing annual community-wide days of social action, providing spiritual care to homebound congregants, interacting with the early education students and leading Jews and non-Jews in prayer and Jewish ritual life.

Prior to Temple Beth Hillel, Rabbi Samuels received his ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem and Los Angeles. It was during these 5 years that he served Jewish communities in Santa Barbara and Temecula, CA. Samuels also honed his skills in providing pastoral care to hospice and hospital patients working at UCLA Medical Center and Kaiser Home Hospice. In addition, he was the recipient of The Samson H. Levey Memorial Prize for showing greatest promise in the study of Rabbinic literature and Talmud.

Rabbi Samuels attended University of Wisconsin-Madison, receiving a B.S. in Marketing. For six years, prior to entering rabbinical school, Samuels worked in institutional equity sales and brokerage operations in San Francisco and Los Angeles at Sutro & Co., Sanders Morris Harris and Stone & Youngberg, LLC.

Rabbi Samuels is originally from San Francisco. He comes to Bellingham with his wife Nicole, a registered nurse, and their two children, Eytan and Shoshana.



## **General Information**

### **Contact Information**

Congregation Beth Israel  
715 San Juan Boulevard  
Bellingham, Washington 98229

Phone: [360-733-8890](tel:360-733-8890)  
Rabbi: Rabbi Joshua Samuels  
Email: [rabbi@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:rabbi@bethisraelbellingham.org)  
Office Manager: Sarah Cobb  
Email: [office@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:office@bethisraelbellingham.org)

### **Website**

Don't miss our congregational website, [bethisraelbellingham.org](http://bethisraelbellingham.org), updated regularly with all synagogue events and activities, as well as directories, board minutes, sermons and other information. Members have access to a members-only section via information on the website or by contacting Melissa Schapiro at [webmaster@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:webmaster@bethisraelbellingham.org).

### **Weekly E-Newsletter**

Every Wednesday afternoon, all members who have submitted an email address receive a short email newsletter – The Timbrel - that includes services, announcements, yahrzeits, event information for the coming week, and notices of future planned activities.

### **The Shul Shofar**

*The Shul Shofar* is the bi-monthly newsletter of our Jewish community that is sent at no charge to all members. It includes a calendar of events and articles by the rabbi and congregational leaders, which help keep us all in touch and up to date. It can also be found on the website. For further information about our newsletter, please contact Mary Somerville at 360-733-8890 or [office@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:office@bethisraelbellingham.org)

### **History of Congregation Beth Israel**

The Bellingham Jewish Community has a rich heritage dating back to 1908, when our congregation was formed primarily by Lithuanian immigrants who came to the shores of the far western United States. Please go to our website for a full account of the history of our congregation.

### **Code of Conduct**

Please see the document at the end of this packet for our congregation's Code of Conduct.

### **Annual Membership Financial Commitment**

Our annual membership contributions from congregants are, by far, the most important element of our synagogue's operating income. Our expectation is that all families will pledge the maximum that they each can afford to support our congregation. You'll find our detailed Financial Commitment policies at the end of this packet. Please see the attached dues letter and pledge form for complete information, and don't hesitate to call Board President Jodi Litt (360-739-4825) or Treasurer Karen Sloss (360-319-7258) with any questions or concerns. All pledges and conversations are held in the strictest confidence

### **Scrip**

This is a way to financially support the synagogue without any cost to you or Beth Israel! It is called scrip and this is how it works: you buy a gift card through the synagogue to somewhere you regularly shop, say, for \$100 at the grocery store. You pay \$100 for it, you spend it for \$100 - and the store gives a percent to Beth Israel. It couldn't be easier! Questions? Contact Joan Wayne at [jawayne2@gmail.com](mailto:jawayne2@gmail.com)



## **Services, Programs & Education**

### **Religious Services and Celebrations:**

Shabbat is celebrated weekly at Congregation Beth Israel with services on Friday evenings and on three Saturday mornings each month. There is a weekly Torah study from 9:30 am to 10:30 am each Saturday. To accommodate different needs and schedules, Friday services begin at 6:15 pm or, on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday, at 7:30 pm, with either an oneg or a potluck dinner after the service. The first Friday of each month is a family service, often with leadership by students. There is no service on 5<sup>th</sup> Fridays and congregants are encouraged to celebrate in their homes. Saturday morning services include a monthly Conservative-style service led by CBI members, and a

monthly brief Tot Shabbat service for families with very young children. The weekly e-newsletter, website and the bi-monthly *The Shul Shofar* newsletter list the schedule.

Special services are held for all Jewish holidays. Times and dates for these services will appear in *The Shul Shofar* and weekly emails, as well as on the synagogue website [bethisraelbellingham.org](http://bethisraelbellingham.org). Our services are a welcoming blend of traditional and modern, Hebrew and English, prayer and song. Guests are welcome. Please join us.

Life cycle events are honored, including baby namings, B'rit Milah (circumcision), Bar/Bat Mitzvah, weddings, funerals and headstone unveilings. For more information about life cycle events please contact the Rabbi. For information about High Holiday Services please see the website, *Shul Shofar* or call the office in the late summer.

### **Kesher Center for Jewish Learning:**

Kesher includes our religious school, b'nei mitzvah training and programming for ages birth through high school and adult education. The curriculum includes Judaic studies and Hebrew, and is designed to support and nurture a deep sense of community and foster a positive Jewish identity. Registration forms are generally e-mailed in June. Please call the office (360-733-8890) if your children have not previously registered. Contact Kesher Co-Director Leah Bordman at [kesher@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:kesher@bethisraelbellingham.org) for more information.

### **Bar/Bat Mitzvah:**

Bar/Bat Mitzvah training for children and adults can be arranged with the Rabbi.

### **Adult Education:**

Adult education at Congregation Beth Israel is an ever-changing menu of classes and activities led by the Rabbi, Cantorial Soloist and others. They include adult B'nai Mitzvah training, history, Torah and Talmud study, Hebrew, music and meditation, Jewish ethics, and more. Rabbi Samuels will also facilitate Living Room Learning sessions on a topic of the host's choice.

### **Youth Group:**

Beth Israel is home to a high school youth group – BAY (Bellingham Area Youth) – affiliated with the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) organization. The group is run by an elected board and hosts regular activities. Many youth attend regional NFTY events. As part of Kesher Center for Jewish learning, teen programming is in development by the Youth Program Coordinator.

### **URJ Camp Kalsman:**

Beth Israel is fortunate to be located about one hour away from one of the newest URJ camps, making it easy for a high proportion of our youth to attend each summer. Campership support is available.

### **Death and Dying**

To contact the Rabbi, call the synagogue at 360-733-8890. If you get the voicemail recording, listen until a number is given to reach the Rabbi. Chevra Kaddisha services are available to members at no charge. There is a brochure entitled *End of Life Planning* available on the website and at the synagogue. For information regarding burial plots please contact Janis Ban at [janisban@gmail.com](mailto:janisban@gmail.com).



## **Congregation Beth Israel Committees**

We wouldn't be the vibrant community that we are without our committees and task forces. We encourage members to find ways to volunteer...join a committee, volunteer to help with events, and look for other ways to feel connected to the community. Further descriptions and contact information is available on our website [bethisraelbellingham.org](http://bethisraelbellingham.org) and in *The Shul Shofar*. You can also let a Membership Committee representative know if you would like to know more about a committee or task force to help you get connected.



## **Board of Directors**

The Congregation Beth Israel Board of Directors is comprised of sixteen members and one youth representative. Monthly meetings are open to the congregation. Contact information and minutes can be found in the members-only section of the website. The board hosts the annual meeting for the congregation each May.



## **Donations**

### **Where to Direct Donations:**

Do you wish to honor someone close to you, thank a friend or remember a loved one? A donation to one of Congregation Beth Israel's special funds is a great way to do it! Donations are listed in *The Shul Shofar* & Tribute Cards are mailed to the recipient. Please mail all checks to:

Congregation Beth Israel • 751 San Juan Blvd • Bellingham, WA 98229

### **Special Funds - Contact the Beth Israel Office**

Camp Scholarship & Youth Activities  
Care Committee  
Endowment Fund  
General Fund  
Building Fund  
Holocaust Education Fund  
Israel Trip Youth Scholarship Fund  
Keshet (Religious School Tuition)  
Max Glass Library  
Rabbi's Discretionary Fund  
Rabbi Gartner Scholarship  
Rabbi's Professional Development  
Youth Group (BAY)

## Questions?

Please don't hesitate to contact the office or the membership chair

Office: 360-733-8890 or [office@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:office@bethisraelbellingham.org)

Sue Mahar: [susansklar@gmail.com](mailto:susansklar@gmail.com)

## CBI Code of Conduct

Congregation Beth Israel is a Jewish community that exists in the context of our people's covenantal relationship with God. Ours is a vibrant, multi-generational congregation, guided by tradition, grounded in the modern world, and infused with the sacred values of our faith. We are guided by the principle of Kavod (Honor and Respect) and adhere to the policies and values of our congregation.

Jewish tradition teaches that every person is created *B'tzelem Elohim*, in the Divine image. In the spirit of this core Jewish value, every individual who participates in events within Congregation Beth Israel – including congregants, staff, presenters, vendors, guests, and all others – will be valued and treated with respect. Every participant, whatever their role, has a right to a safe and inclusive experience, including treatment that is fair, honest, dignified, and nonjudgmental. Areas of concern include but are not limited to discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment or misconduct.

### 1. Discrimination

Congregation Beth Israel does not tolerate, in any form or at any time, discrimination or offensive behavior or acts against anyone in our community or participating in our events. This includes but is not limited to actions taken against others based on their race, age, religion, disability, marital status, veteran status, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, size, ethnicity, origin, religion, class, political opinions, or any other identity.

### 2. Bullying

Bullying is hostile behavior, either as a single act or repeated over time, committed with the intent to degrade, humiliate, or oppress another person. It may include:

- Verbal behavior such as making threats, inappropriate sexual comments, and taunting;
- Misbehavior such as spreading rumors and purposeful exclusion.
- Physical behavior that involves hurting another individual's body or damaging possessions.
- Cyberbullying, such as persistent, unwanted texts, phone calls, or social media messages, or posting private, personal information of others online.

Bullying typically involves a real or perceived power imbalance such as using popularity, position, physical strength, or access to embarrassing information in order to control or harm others. Thus, it is important to note that while bullying will not be tolerated, respectful disagreement and good-faith critiques of one's work and activities, even if sometimes harsh, are

not bullying. Individuals' ability to disagree and/or share ideas and concerns openly and without reprisal must not be compromised and will be respected and protected.

### **3. Sexual Harassment or Misconduct**

We are responsible for ensuring that personal and sexual boundaries are respected in our relationships with others. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, and other unwelcome verbal, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment and will not be tolerated.

#### **How to Report a Violation**

To report a violation of this Code of Conduct, please see the Grievance Policy.

Please note that the behavior of CBI employees is governed by the CBI Employee Handbook; the behavior of contractors by their Independent Contractor Agreement.

### **Annual Financial Membership Commitment Policy**

Annual financial support of CBI is expected from each member household. However, no person shall be disqualified from enjoying the privileges of Membership in Good Standing solely because of inability to pay. Responsibility to grant appropriate financial relief rests jointly with the President and the Treasurer.

- Each membership unit (individual, couple or family) is expected to contribute annually to the congregation's operational needs. This is typically referred to as a "membership commitment" and is a requirement for being a Member in Good Standing at CBI.
- Each year, the Board determines a "target commitment amount" based on the current CBI budget, and this information is provided in an annual letter to all members.
- Each membership unit then determines their annual contribution according to their unique financial resources (income and/or assets), keeping in mind the average "cost of membership" reflected in the "target amount". As a general guide, in the "fair-share" nature of this system, a commitment of 2% of annual income is suggested. While voluntary and adjustable, the annual commitment is critical to CBI's existence.
- The annual letter requests each member to renew & pledge their annual amount before Rosh Hashana AND select a payment plan: either pay the full amount by December 31st or make arrangements for monthly/quarterly/bi-annual payments over the course of the fiscal year. A Member in Good Standing is one who keeps current with their selected arrangement.
- In this day of remote connectivity we offer an **Affiliate Membership** to supporters who participate from a distance (outside the Puget Sound Region) yet want to maintain a connection with CBI. Affiliate Members receive the Shofar Newsletter, the weekly Timbrel, and zoom access to services, programs and events at membership pricing. Affiliate members may also be listed in our membership directory. An annual contribution of \$500 or greater is suggested.
- An annual financial commitment is waived for full-time students and active military personnel.
- All financial information including the dues commitment amounts is strictly confidential. Only the President, Financial Sustainability Director, Treasurer and bookkeeper are privy

to this information. Again, welcome to Congregation Beth Israel. We hope you found this packet informative, but please reach out if you have any questions. We hope you will feel more and more comfortable and welcome as members of CBI. We hope you reach and take advantage of all we offer - especially being a part of the Jewish Community. We'd love to see you volunteer at whatever level you feel comfortable....don't worry someone will be available to guide you. We hope you check out our website and take advantage of the information it provides to members.