

# Congregation Beth Israel

## New Member Information Packet



### Introduction

#### **Welcome to Our Community - 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 240 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 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.
- Taking part in social action activities.
- Participating in the building and consecrating of our new synagogue.
- Learning and socializing through programs, adult education classes, Sisterhood or Brotherhood and Beth Israel's many committees.
- Keeping up to date on synagogue events and activities by receiving *The Shul Shofar*, our weekly E-newsletter, and access to the members-only section of our website, <https://bethisraelbellingham.org>.
- Participating in Congregation Beth Israel's Keshet Center for Jewish Learning (birth - 18 years).
- Receiving Bar or Bat Mitzvah training for boys and girls coming of age, and for adults.
- Joining our teen youth group, NFTY-Northwest Chapter.
- Becoming part of a welcoming and diverse Jewish community.

We look forward to your participation in all of these things with us. 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)  
Fax: (none at present)  
Rabbi: Rabbi Joshua Samuels  
Email: [rabbi@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:rabbi@bethisraelbellingham.org)  
Administrator: Mary Somerville  
Email: [office@bethisraelbellingham.org](mailto:office@bethisraelbellingham.org)

### **Website**

Don't miss our congregational website, <https://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 that includes services, announcements, yahrzeits and Keshet updates, as well as event information for the coming week.

## **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.

## **Annual Dues Pledge**

Our annual dues 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. Please see the attached dues letter and pledge form for complete information, and don't hesitate to call Board President Miriam Schwartz (360/671-8574) or Treasurer Terri Weiner (360/671-3480) with any questions or concerns. All pledges and conversations are held in the strictest confidence

## **Scrip and Amazon**

Here are two ways to financially support the synagogue without any cost to you or Beth Israel! The first 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. The second is through Amazon: when you order, open the Amazon site via the Beth Israel website - click on fundraising, then click the Amazon button. Make your order and Amazon will donate up to 8% of your purchase to Beth Israel. It couldn't be easier! Questions? Contact Joan Wayne at [jawayne2@gmail.com](mailto:jawayne2@gmail.com)

## **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. Burial plots - contact Janis Ban at [janisban@gmail.com](mailto:janisban@gmail.com) .



## **Services, Programs & Education**

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

Shabbat is celebrated weekly at Congregation Beth Israel with services on Friday evenings and on two 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 (1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>) or 7:30 pm (2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>), with either an oneg or a potluck dinner after the service. Included are family services with leadership by students and Tot Shabbat for very young children. There is no

service on 5th Fridays and congregants are encouraged to celebrate in their homes or with the Shabbat Dinner Crowd. See the website for more information about the Shabbat Dinner Crowd's 3rd and 5th Friday community dinner gatherings. 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 <https://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'nai mitzvot 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 packets are generally mailed in June. Please call the office (360-733-8890) if your children have not previously registered. Contact Kesher Co-Director Nicky Naiman 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 lead 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.

### **Brotherhood:**

The Brotherhood of Congregation Beth Israel is a men's group dedicated to supporting our community and to participating in casual activities to have fun and get to know one another better. Examples are sponsoring the Kesher school picnic and pancake breakfast, father-children bowling, meeting at restaurants and going to Seattle Mariners games.

### **Sisterhood:**

Congregation Beth Israel's Sisterhood is a women's group interested in camaraderie and activities that support the synagogue. Sisterhood hosts a Jewish book group and an informal monthly lunch. The group supports the synagogue through youth scholarship assistance, kitchen maintenance, a Jewish calendar for all congregants and by providing a special gift for each Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

### **Golden Girls:**

A gathering of "golden age" women who meet monthly for lunch at a local restaurant to socialize and have fun. The specific date and location can be found in each issue of *The Shul Shofar*.

### **Youth Group:**

Beth Israel is home to a high school youth group 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 Keshet 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.



## **Congregation Beth Israel Committees**

We wouldn't be the vibrant community that we are without our committees and task forces. Further descriptions and contact information is available on our website <https://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.

- Building Committee
- Capital Campaign Committee
- Care Committee
- Cemetery Committee
- Communications Team
- Community Seder
- Congregation Archives
- Family Services & Crafts
- Fundraising Committee
- Governance Task Force
- Hanukkah Party Committee
- Human Resources Committee
- Library Committee
- Membership Committee
- New Synagogue Task Force
- Nominating Committee
- Oneg Committee
- Programming Committee
- Purim Carnival
- Religious Task Force
- Ritual Committee
- Scholarship Committee
- Social Action Committee
- Strategic Planning Committee
- University Liaison



## **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
- Clergy Professional Development
- General Fund
- Keshet (Religious School Tuition)
- Max Glass Library
- Musical Leadership
- New Synagogue (Building)
- Rabbi's Discretionary Fund
- Rabbi Gartner Scholarship
- Youth Group (PHAT)

## **Hadassah Cards - Contact Debbie Adelstein**

## **Trees For Israel Certificates or JF 'Blue Boxes' - Contact Janis Ban**

*Contact information for the above individuals is available on the membership list in the members-only section of the website or by contacting the office at 360-733-8890.*

### **Questions?**

Please don't hesitate to contact the office or the membership committee co-chairs for answers:

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

Ann Suloway: [asuloway@gmail.com](mailto:asuloway@gmail.com)

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