



ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

2024 – 2025

5785

Sunday, May 18, 2025

3:00 PM

Annual Meeting Agenda

May 18, 2025

1. Welcome/Determination of Quorum
2. D'var Torah-Rabbi Samuels
3. Annual Meeting
 - a. Rabbi's Report-Rabbi Samuels
 - b. Treasurer's Report-Karen Sloss
 - c. President's Report-Jodi Litt
4. New Business
 - a. Presentation of the Slate of Directors
2025/2026-Josh Greenberg
5. Eternal Light Leadership Award
Rabbi Samuels and Jodi Litt
6. Adjournment

Congregation Beth Israel Slate of the Board for 2025-2026

President: Erin Cohen*
 Vice President: Jane Relin
 Treasurer: Karen Sloss
 Secretary: Tamar Clarke*

Past President: Jodi Litt*
 Stuart Berman
 Jason Benhaim
 Tammy Dixon* (from Secretary)
 Miriam Davids
 Terri Weiner

New Members

Serge Lindner
 James Finley
 Isaac Blum
 Lucy Naiman (Youth Member)

Continuing (not elected year)

Steven Ban
 Kevin Donner

*Indicates a new/change position on the board.

The following members will be leaving the board:

Paul Blum
 Binnie Perper
 Joshua Greenberg

Presented by Nominating Committee

Joshua Greenberg – Chair
 Marcy Probst
 Amanda Robins
 Michael Braunstein
 Jane Relin

Biographies for New Members

Isaac Blum

Isaac Blum is excited to be joining Congregation Beth Israel's Board of Directors and follow in his father, Paul Blum's, footsteps on the Board. Isaac is currently serving as a Co-Chair of the FMMC and, in the past, was a member of the Nominating Committee. Isaac's children, Lilah & Shay, were B'nai Mitzvahed at San Juan Blvd and Isaac had his Bar Mitzvah at the Broadway location in 1987. He looks forward to standing on the shoulders that have come before us and continue to support a vibrant, diverse and engaged Jewish community in our area.

Serge Lindner

I was born and raised in the Seattle area, where I attended Camp Solomon Schechter, and became a bar mitzvah at Herzl Ner Tamid. My parents, both immigrants from Buenos Aires, instilled in me a love of family far and near, of klezmer music, and of any and all Jewish foods. After completing Medical School at UW, I met my wife Deborah Oksenberg (former CBI Board Member) during our medical residency training in San Francisco. We were married by Rabbi Alan Lew (may his name be for a blessing) through Congregation Beth Sholom in 2002 and moved to Bellingham with our daughter Orly in 2005. We joined CBI, where both Orly and then her brother Avi attended Kesher, and became b'nei mitzvah at CBI. I have loved my work caring for older adults at PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health as a Primary Care Geriatrician, where I also hold administrative leadership positions as our clinic's medical director (Section Chief) and as Division Chief for Primary Care. I truly look forward to this opportunity to work with the Board members and Rabbi, to learn what issues face our community, to contribute where I can, and to deepen my connection to this wonderful community.

James Finley

James and his partner John live in Anacortes Washington. He has a long history of being a college Volleyball coach ending his career at Seattle University. After retiring he taught middle school in Anacortes for 3 years, and although loved by his students he needed to step more into retirement. He is currently head of a summer volleyball camp program in partnership with Nike, that has exploded in popularity. While this consumes a lot of his summertime, it does give him lots of flexibility for projects outside of summer. Their kids are now out of the house and successful young adults. They have been very active in the Skagit Jewish group.

Lucy Naiman

Lucy is 16 years old and a junior at Sehome High School. She enjoys many activities outside of school. Most notably, playing the harp in the school's advanced (and next year chamber) orchestra. She has played the harp since she was 8 and is very passionate about music. Additionally, she also dances multiple styles at The Dance Studio, including Ballet, Jazz, and Musical Theater.

Lucy is part of several teams and clubs. She plays on her school's JV soccer team and serves as co-president of her school's Teen Court chapter. This club is not a mock trial; it is a diversion program where real juvenile cases are heard, and legally binding community service-based consequences are determined.

She has also been a member of DECA since her freshman year, an organization for emerging leaders in business. She has competed at the area, state, and international levels in Hotel and Lodging Management. Last year, she became her school's chapter president, and this year, she

was elected as Area 1 President, serving all DECA chapters from the border to Everett. Additionally, she holds the position of state Vice President of Hospitality, representing nearly 17,000 members.

What Lucy appreciates most about CBI is not just the community itself, but its persistence. She has been part of the congregation since the age of four, witnessing CBI's growth and many transitions—from moving into the new building, to enduring the pandemic, and navigating the aftermath of the October 7th attack. Through it all, the community has remained a source of stability. Some of her closest friends are people she met through CBI, and without their support, her life would not be the same.

Rabbi's Report

Every year I marvel at how quickly time has passed, and this year is no different—except it feels even more astonishing. On July 1, 2025, I will officially begin my 14th year as your rabbi. Fourteen is a number rich with meaning in Jewish tradition and I want to share several of these connections. First, 14 corresponds to the Hebrew word “yad,” meaning hand. And I can’t help but think of all the ways our hands have been joined over the years: in prayer, in celebration, in support, and in building this sacred community together. The hand is a beautiful symbol for a rabbi’s relationship with their community as guiding, lifting, blessing, and building are all done hand in hand. As I begin my 14th year, I think of ‘yad’—the hand—which guides the Torah and binds us to one another. May our hands continue to shape this holy community with care, strength, and love.

There’s also the image of the Passover Seder, with its 14 (or 15, but who’s counting?) steps guiding us from slavery to freedom. Each step is part of a journey that transforms and uplifts. I want to pause and reflect on how my 14 years have been a kind of congregational Seder—moving through challenges, celebrations, teachings, and transformations together. The 14 steps of the Seder remind us that spiritual progress is deliberate and meaningful, and I’m committed to continuing the journey together.

And then there’s Jacob—the patriarch who worked 14 years to marry Leah and Rachel—7 years each. These years symbolize dedication, patience, and enduring love. What better metaphor is there for the time I have spent in this congregation? Jacob’s 14 years of labor for love remind me that deep relationships are built over time—with perseverance, commitment, and heart. That’s what these years have been with you.

The following is a summary of the past year’s highlights, organized into the key areas of our congregational life: education, Shabbat and festivals, life-cycle events, and Israel.

Education

This year marked a new model for conversion education. Instead of offering my usual Judaism 201 class, I created a group conversion course tailored for students who had previously completed my intro course. It was an incredibly enriching experience. We read Sarah Hurwitz’s *Here All Along*, explored Mishnah and Talmud, discussed big Jewish questions, and created space for personal reflection and growth. Several students have since completed their conversions, while others are preparing for their beit dins. I plan to alternate between Judaism 201 and this group format depending on demand in future years.

I also had the joy of teaching a course on Ethical Wills through WWU’s Academy for Lifelong Learning. This is a subject close to my heart, and I hope to bring it directly to CBI members in the coming year.

Currently, I’m finishing an 8-session class on Zionism using Gil Troy’s *The Zionist Ideas*. We’ve studied a wide range of voices—from early pioneers to modern thinkers—to better understand the evolving story of Jewish peoplehood and national identity. With Zionism at the forefront of global conversation, thoughtful education feels more essential than ever.

Our Keshet program remains a bright light in our community. I’ve been co-teaching 7th grade with Leah Bordman and Miriam Buckman. This year’s theme is Israel, and we’ve covered

everything from geography, history, and diversity. Leah and I wrote the curriculum ourselves and hope to pass the teaching torch next year as we focus on program oversight and being more present for all the students and staff on Sunday mornings. (Interested? Let us know!)

I have also been teaching the Confirmation class. This year we studied what it means to be an advocate by looking deeply into many issues, such as: Fair Trade Chocolate, Separation of Church/State, Euthanasia/Death w/Dignity, Voting Rights, Antisemitism, Immigration, and Medical Ethics. Chaperoning three sophomores from this class to DC and watching them lobby our elected officials on some of these issues is a highlight of my year. I hope you will attend the Confirmation service on Friday, June 6th to wish our graduating students a hearty “mazel tov!”

Looking ahead, I'd like to form an Adult Education Committee to help shape future learning opportunities. If you'd like to join, please reach out.

Shabbat

This year we had plenty of shabbat offerings with several service leaders. Each week brings something unique.

First Fridays: Family services led by Mikayla Goodkin and Leah Bordman, with birthday/anniversary blessings and class participation when Keshet is in session. Sometimes I'll officiate a baby naming during this service. Always followed by a potluck—our most popular Shabbat!

First Saturdays: Alternate between Shir HaShalom's Renewal service and Andrea Shupack's Contemplative Shabbat. Starting soon, Andrea will lead monthly for consistency, while we look for a new home for the Renewal experience.

Second & Third Fridays: Services led by Andrea and Mikayla.

Second Saturdays: Reform morning service led by Andrea and me with a potluck luncheon.

Third Saturdays: Tot Shabbat continues to grow. One recent Saturday saw 20 children! This might be my favorite service to lead. I also love having my daughter Shoshana as my helper.

Fourth Fridays: Andrea's Shabbat Shira in the round has become a beloved musical experience.

Fourth Saturdays: Lay-led Conservative minyan in the Beit Midrash organized by David Zimmerman.

Monthly Willows Visit: I lead shabbat blessings and discussions for Jewish residents on the 4th Friday of the month.

No matter your Shabbat style, there's something for you here. I welcome you to experience the variety of shabbat at CBI.

Jewish Festivals

It seems as though we observe a different Jewish festival every few weeks!

Passover: Our Second Night Seder was once again a hit, thanks to Jane Hammerstrom, Nicole Samuels, and the entire committee. I co-led with Mikayla, and yes, I was “whipped” with leeks by enthusiastic children—as is tradition!

Purim: The Wicked-themed spiel directed by Naomi Pomerantz brought the house down. The carnival was fun and profitable—thanks to Sarah Cobb’s heroic efforts. Congratulations to Marta Brand for winning the erev Purim costume contest as Mordechai’s mother-in-law.

Chanukah: I finally reclaimed the dreidel trophy. That alone makes the year a win. Thanks to Sarah Cobb and Victoria Mayers for helping so much with this family-friendly event. And many thanks to the Program team for organizing a joyful kickoff event on the first night.

High Holy Days: The High Holy Days were lovely. Andrea’s cantorial leadership and the voices from our congregants lifted us to new heights. Congregant Sam Sinai, who is the principal cellist at the BSO, played cello again and I hope she is able to continue to share the bima with Andrea and me in the years to come. This year I focused three of my sermons on Israel. I have appreciated meeting folks to discuss them. In fact, I am still talking to congregants about the sermon dealing with antisemitism/anti- Zionism on campus.

Tikkun Leil Shavuot: Our erev Shavuot study session continues to grow. We had a rich lineup of teachers and topics. Let me know if you are interested in offering a ten-minute teaching for the upcoming event on Sunday, June 1.

Yom HaShoah: We had a moving Yom HaShoah service this past year. While it was not led by a Keshet class, it will be next year. Instead, Bellingham Symphony Orchestra Maestro and CBI congregant, Yaniv Attar, talked with the community about classical music that was written during the Shoah, some of it composed in the camps.

Life-Cycle Events

We celebrated a few b’nei mitzvah’s last year, but just you wait, there are many coming up, beginning with Micah Parker’s this coming Saturday. Micah is the son of Reid and Erin and the grandson to Kevin and Iris Parker. The current 7th grade class is the largest we’ve ever had. Due to the many b/m services, some of our regular monthly shabbat services will be cancelled to accommodate these simchas. We encourage you to attend and celebrate with your community. I am grateful to Leah Bordman for leading our b’mitzvah program with me. She is patient and loving with each student. All of our teens shine and their divrei torah are insightful and inspiring.

Last year I began to ramp up counseling sessions in my office and pastoral visits to people’s homes and to the hospital. This year has seen an increase to all of the above. I try my hardest to reach out to folks when they are celebrating a simcha and call families when they are going through a tough time. Additionally, I have six couples that I am doing monthly pre-marital counseling sessions with. These are some of my favorite times of the week. As always, please let me know if you hear of folks who could use a visit. Thank you to our Care Committee for looking after so many people in our community.

Thankfully there were more baby namings this year than funerals. This might be a first for me. It is an honor to meet with families and guide them through these sacred times. Thank you for showing up to support your friends whether they are celebrating a new baby or saying goodbye to a loved one. Feeling supported by one’s community during these times is one

of the main reasons why we join a synagogue in the first place.

Israel

Even though 20 months have passed since October 7, 2023, Israel remains front and center on my mind. The first news I check in the morning and nearly all the podcasts I listen to and books I read are about Israel. She is still in the midst of an existential war, fighting enemies on multiple fronts. What happens in Israel affects Jews in the Diaspora whether we like it or not. I've tried to offer space for learning and reflection through book discussions and speaker events to help shed light on the nuances of the war. I plan to continue these educational offerings. The next is a Zoom discussion with Times of Israel reporter, Sam Sokol, on June 22. What I want most for the CBI community is that we stay informed, engaged, and open to hearing multiple perspectives whatever your political leanings. Push yourselves to step away from your comfort zone and learn from those whose perspectives you might disagree with. I am always happy to share resources or simply talk about the current situation.

Thank You

Finally, I want to make sure I express gratitude to a few people. First, our amazing staff: Sarah Cobb, Ken Weaver, Victoria Mayers and Leah Bordman. Second, our incredibly talented Cantorial soloist, Andrea Shupack and Keshet song leader, Mikayla Goodkin. And finally, our Board of Directors led by Jodi Litt. I am saddened that I won't get to work with Jodi for one more year. Her leadership was exemplary. Jodi challenged me to grow and lead with clarity, compassion, and resolve. I am excited to begin working with Erin Cohen. She has my full confidence and support.

Thank you for sharing your gifts with this sacred community. Thank you for the privilege of walking beside you—for 13 meaningful years and now, into our 14th. May our hands continue to build, bless, and lift us this holy congregation together.

With deep gratitude and hope,
Rabbi Joshua Samuels

FINANCE COMMITTEE and TREASURER'S REPORT

Chair: Karen Sloss (Treasurer & Chair)

Committee Members: David Goldman, Josh Greenberg, Jeff Jaffe, Dan Ohms, Renee Relin, David Robinson, Miriam Schwartz, and Terri Weiner. Also: Jodi Litt, President and Rabbi Joshua Samuels, ex-officio.

The Finance Committee oversees the CBI annual budget and other financial matters that may arise. During the past year, the Finance Committee discussed and made recommendations to the Board on a new annual budget and advised on an increase in Keshet Fees and the target Membership Pledge.

Beth Israel's finances continue to be strong and remain on budget thanks to generous annual contributions from our membership. The Finance Committee and Board are extremely grateful for the CBI community's enduring support of our operations, programs, and other endeavors. However, especially in the current inflationary environment, CBI's income needs to increase on an annual basis to maintain the staff and programs deemed critical to our operations.

BUDGET

The attached spreadsheet reflects the current year finances through the end of April 2025. Expenses are in line with the budget, and this year's income has been strengthened by a steady stream of new members and an impressive response (generous donations) to the Annual HHD Drive initiated by President Jodi Litt. As always, our staff is diligent in keeping costs under control.

In the same spreadsheet, please note the far-right-hand column with the budget for next year (July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026) which was just approved by our Board of Directors. Expenses are anticipated to grow by roughly 10% next year, so sources of income will need to rise accordingly to balance the budget. CBI primarily relies on the community spirit and generosity of our membership to make all this happen! Aside from occasional donations from "friends of CBI", there is no outside funding of our operations, so everyone doing their part to sustain our vibrant congregation is sincerely appreciated.

ASSETS and LIABILITIES

Thanks to the generosity New Synagogue donors over the past 25 years, CBI has the good fortune to own its building and property outright (no debt) with a value of approximately \$9 million! In addition, CBI maintains a substantial Savings Account balance of \$200-225k (equivalent of 4-5 months' operating expenses) and currently has over \$85,000 in the Building Fund (all earmarked for specific projects). Other "restricted" funds, targeted to specific uses, hold approximately \$84,000 and, in addition, the CBI Endowment Fund now stands at \$44,400.

The CBI Finance Team includes Sarah Cobb as Office Manager & Bookkeeper and Terri Weiner as Bookkeeping & Accounting Consultant.

Congregation Beth Israel Annual Budget

| | CURRENT YEAR Budget 2024-2025 | BUDGET As of 4-30-25 | Percent of Budget | NEWLY APPROVED Budget for 2025-2026 |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Income | | 83.33% | | |
| Dues | \$425,000 | \$365,498 | 86% | \$440,000 |
| Kesher Tuition | 59,000 | 49,587 | 84% | 56,000 |
| Kesher Scholarships & Discounts | 9,000 | 9,583 | 106% | 11,000 |
| Kesher Donations & Programs | 6,000 | 6,000 | 100% | 9,000 |
| Donations - General | 30,000 | 16,784 | 56% | 25,000 |
| HH Tickets & Donations | 6,000 | 7,024 | 117% | 8,000 |
| Program Income – Events/Adult Ed * | 6,000 | 13,497 | 225% | 18,000 |
| Program Income – Holidays | 10,000 | 12,095 | 121% | 14,000 |
| Facility Rentals | 3,000 | 2,241 | 75% | 5,500 |
| Fund Raising (Scrip) | 9,000 | 6,328 | 70% | 8,000 |
| Shofar | 1,200 | 920 | 77% | 1,500 |
| Investment Income | 10,500 | 8,775 | 84% | 11,000 |
| Total Income | \$574,700 | \$498,331 | 87% | \$607,000 |
| * Programs \$8,029 Adult Ed \$5,468 | | | | |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Bank Service Charges | \$2,500 | \$6,548 | 262% | \$3,000 |
| Building Maintenance | 42,000 | 35,918 | 86% | 44,000 |
| Security Guards & Systems | 56,000 | 30,918 | 55% | 46,000 |
| Committee Exp & Leadership Dev | 1,500 | 144 | 10% | 500 |
| Conference for CBI President | 2,500 | 2,441 | 98% | N/A |
| Volunteer Appreciation | 500 | 0 | 0% | 500 |
| HHD Expenses (non-security) | 9,000 | 8,097 | 90% | 8,800 |
| Donations | 1,500 | 1,500 | 100% | 1,500 |
| Consulting and Legal Services | 500 | 460 | 92% | 0 |
| Insurance Coverage | 14,000 | 10,613 | 76% | 15,000 |
| Licenses & Taxes | 2,200 | 1,863 | 85% | 1,900 |
| Payroll – Rabbi, Admin, Soloist, Yth Grp | 267,000 | 225,785 | 85% | 280,000 |
| Postage and Delivery | 1,000 | 578 | 58% | 650 |
| Programming - Event/Adult Ed ** | 15,000 | 15,424 | 103% | 16,000 |
| Programming - Holiday | 10,000 | 13,164 | 132% | 14,000 |
| Religious School Expenses | 92,000 | 78,207 | 85% | 112,000 |
| Supplies | 14,000 | 12,578 | 90% | 17,000 |
| Telephone & Internet | 8,000 | 6,473 | 81% | 8,500 |
| URJ Dues | 21,000 | 10,194 | 49% | 21,000 |
| Utilities | 13,000 | 14,918 | 115% | 16,500 |
| Total Expenses | \$573,200 | \$475,823 | 83% | \$606,850 |
| ** Programs \$12,376 Adult Ed \$3,048 | | | | |
| Net Income after Expenses | \$1,500 | \$22,508 | | \$150 |

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The headcount of CBI members is an often talked about statistic in the finance committee and amongst the board. What constitutes a member? On first blush it is easy to say well a member is one who pays dues. Fair enough...but CBI never turns away those seeking to belong due to lack of ability to pay. We do ask all to pay what they can afford and that can span the gamut from a little each month to families who truly stretch. Some can afford no payment and yet we still consider them members of our collective Jewish community.

No matter what the exact number we can agree upon is that CBI membership is growing. We've grown every year since Rabbi Samuels has been our spiritual leader, and we continue to add. We are certainly over 300 family members and every month we receive new membership applications.

With that growth comes some aches and pains. Added building use strains our maintenance and administrative staff. Honestly, I rely on Sarah Cobb so much it makes me wonder how my predecessors held this office without her support. We love seeing this big, beautiful space utilized and continue conversations about how to use our grounds more effectively to expand and offer more to our members.

You've heard it said many times that CBI relies heavily on volunteers and especially on some super volunteers who give, selflessly, many days a week. These super volunteers work to bring programs and events to our Jewish community; they coordinate the safety and security behind the scenes so all can be on our campus and feel comfortable. Our facilities leadership are volunteers. Our Audio-Visual team who allow members to observe Shabbat from home over Zoom are volunteers. I could go on and on. This is not particularly unusual. Most synagogues have a strong spirit of volunteerism as working together for a cause builds community and relationships. But when our Rabbi, who puts in countless numbers of hours on his Rabbinical duties, is left cleaning up after a Purim Shpiel or breaking down the Purim carnival with the help of only a couple of people, it is easy to see our system of reliance is more than bending under the weight of the demand.

When we were small in numbers over on Broadway we could more easily rely on each other to make sure maintenance and upkeep happened. After all how could I make eye contact with another member if, time after time, I didn't stick around to clean up or missed the call to come weed the side yard. Long time members remember us all pitching in self-produce the Shul Shofar or setting up and breaking down off site Purim Carnivals. As a Keshet parent, I wouldn't have thought of attending a Chanukah party without making latkes or providing a dessert or staying to sweep up or do dishes afterwards. I long for us to return to this spirit. At the Keshet level it was instilled in our children via demonstration from the parents what it meant to be part of a congregation of Jews. Children saw the parents in the classrooms or meeting together in the social hall about how best to support the program. They learned by seeing the parents bring in snacks or taking a patrol shift or weeding a plot of garden. Families in essence were self-fulfilling examples of Tikkun Olam. What we needed as a collective Congregation, was nurtured by the display of active participation at a small level and grew. And yet somewhere along the line, largely when we moved and became less physically connected, the spirit of pitching in and stepping up to help waned. As we've grown and our now smaller handful volunteer to a much bigger membership have continued to selflessly give. At some point we reach a tipping point where the dedicated group can't keep up with the demands of the whole.

In the eyes of many for us it's time to look at our next hire. This person would assume responsibility around holidays coordination and act as a resource provided for families as they are planning their Binet Mitzvot. They would make sure that all members are pitching in from all corners of our diverse congregation easing the reliance on the same core of people who are understandable tiring. This next hire would help with fund raising and approach families who have joined since our last capital campaign to donate to our building fund ensuring planned capital improvements for the building and the property can get underway. We need help in making sure each member pays a fair share to keep us operating fully. An Executive Director to lead along with Rabbi Samuels is in my mind our next step to provide necessary infrastructure for us to grow.

Serving as the CBI president has been an honor and a privilege. I leave the position in the capable hands of Erin Cohen who, along with a talented and dedicated Executive Committee and board, continues the work to hold all members as valued while ensuring our financial stability and asking all to do their fair share, so we collectively benefit.

Congregation Beth Israel 2024 Strategic Plan Report

One of the most important responsibilities of the Board of Directors is to plan for the future of the congregation. We are to articulate the purpose of the organization and determine if its mission is being fulfilled. Periodically, we must identify things that are going well and things that need improvement.

In 2024, the Board of Directors engaged in a Strategic Planning process designed to guide us into the future. The Planning Committee included Steve Ban, Jason Benhaim, Stuart Berman, Paul Blum, Erin Cohen, Binnie Perper and Jane Relin. President Jodi Litt, Treasurer Karen Sloss and Rabbi Samuels also participated in the process. The committee sought input from active committees and people.

We developed a new (and briefer) Mission Statement.

Congregation Beth Israel is a home for Jewish Life in Northwest Washington. Together we pray, celebrate, learn, and share Jewish practices and values.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Respondents to our surveys described many more strengths than weaknesses.

We have a new building that serves us well and is mostly finished. The funds raised for the New Building Fund have enabled the completion of the commercial kitchen, the improvements added the bima and back patio and other small improvements and safety measures. Fortunately, we are debt free thanks to strong member participation and some very generous donors and we operate within our budget. Generally speaking, congregants feel positive about being part of our community.

Our membership has grown significantly over 2024, as has enrollment in Keshet. We have a well-respected rabbi and a dedicated staff including a new administrative assistant, a maintenance person, and two Keshet Directors and many teachers.

Most of the work done to govern the community and direct operations and finances is done by committees of volunteers. Committees provide interesting educational opportunities and programming, support our most vulnerable members, attract and support new members, and manage the building. Luckily, we have had a small core of very dedicated volunteers that make possible many day to day activities and our holiday events, onegs, fundraising and building management. In addition, most Committee Chairs donate many hours.

While we have many strengths, one problem came up repeatedly from the participants. We are run by volunteers, but we do not have enough volunteers to keep everything we enjoy going. Given the small staff, many volunteers are needed to complete all tasks. We are at risk of “burning out” our super volunteers. A larger staff would be very helpful but is not within our current budget.

And we need more volunteer leaders. We do not currently have a social action committee because no one has stepped forward to become the committee Chair. We also need a Chair for our Events and Rentals committee, and our governance committee is seeking a leader.

In order to have enough manpower, Congregation Beth Israel needs to attract and recruit more volunteers or bring in more money to support hiring staff.

Goal for next year: Developing more manpower to support our blossoming congregation and to recruit the volunteers and leaders that will carry us into the future.

In 2025, The Board of Directors is undertaking a process to address this goal. It has two parts.

Volunteer and Leader Recruitment:

We have begun in depth discussions of volunteerism and how to create a culture that values volunteering.

We have scheduled a volunteer fair on May 4, 2025 where CBI committees will demonstrate their work.

Adding Staff:

We have a small group that includes the Executive Committee, the rabbi and the chair of the Human Resources committee to review our current staffing and determine our priorities and unmet needs.

We plan to have made significant progress on this goal by the beginning of CBI's Fiscal Year 26-27.

Education

KESHER ANNUAL REPORT

Co-Directors: Leah Bordman and Victoria Mayers

This Year:

We are so proud of what we have created and accomplished in Keshet this year! We enrolled 90 students, ages birth-10th grade, and we employed 10 teachers, including two specialists. We also trained 15 Madrichim, who worked with Leah Bordman each month to dive into their roles in the classroom through conversations and activities based around role modeling, building connections, safety, and communication.

Each of our classes have led a Family Shabbat service this year, which have been meaningful and fun. The students spent four Sundays leading up to their class's service working with their teacher(s) and our Music Specialist, Mikayla Goodkin, to choose themes and music that matter to them. In addition to class services, Mikayla's role in Keshet has been to bring fun Jewish music and musical activities to every class each week. She curates and implements unique and age-appropriate lessons for every age group, and it is joyous hearing our students singing and playing instruments in the building throughout the Keshet day.

Our Hebrew Specialist, Jason Benhaim has been working with all Keshet students between K-6th grade on their reading and speaking Hebrew skills. These lessons are planned creatively and taught through experiential methods that Jason works continuously to design and implement, thinking deeply about what each age group should know, and how to effectively teach them. He's worked hard this year to build upon the programs he wrote last year. Jason has also added "Hebrew Word of the Day" to our morning T'fillah before Keshet and it has been a fun way to get the whole family involved in Hebrew education! In addition to Sunday Hebrew lessons with Jason, students in 5th and 6th grades have had mandatory weekday Zoom Hebrew this year. Because the b'nei mitzvah dates of the current class are so spread out, this was also offered to the 7th graders as optional additional Hebrew to what they get with Leah Bordman and Rabbi Samuels. The majority of the 7th grade class opted into extra Hebrew lessons this year, and these were taught by Leah Bordman, Abby Kroopkin, and Miriam Buckman based on student skill level, with the intention of bringing everyone up to a level of comfort reading prayers needed for b'nei mitzvah.

Speaking of b'nei mitzvah, this year's 7th grade b'nei mitzvah class is the largest in CBI history with 18 students. They have been taking b'nei mitzvah class with Rabbi Samuels and Leah Bordman after Keshet each week where they learn prayers, trope, and discuss the feelings associated with becoming b'nei mitzvah. Once each child is 30-weeks away from their own b'nei mitzvah, they have begun private weekly training with Leah Bordman to finalize prayer knowledge, learn Torah, and Haftarah. Approximately 10-15 weeks after that, they add in weekly meetings with Rabbi Samuels to work through writing their d'var Torah. Currently, Rabbi and Leah are at their peak (each working privately with 10-12 individual CBI students per week), and the first two ceremonies will take place at the end of May!

This year in Keshet, we implemented a new 7th grade Israel curriculum written by Leah Bordman and Rabbi Samuels, and in rotation by Leah, Rabbi, and Miriam Buckman. This curriculum was curated with the help of Israel Link, an online resource bank we've had the pleasure of working with this year. We plan to continue working with them in future years, and to continue the 7th Grade Israel Year moving forward.

The Massa class has successfully completed its three-year grant cycle. They remain in good standing with the Samis Foundation, therefore, the Keshet admin team will continue to research additional sponsorships, grants, and outside funding resources to support CBI youth programs.

The Confirmation class also had a great year of deep learning. They discussed social justice with Rabbi Samuels and three teens traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby in front of nation representatives at the L'Taken program. They will be sharing about this experience at their Family Shabbat service on June 6th.

As mentioned above, we employed 15 Madrichim in Keshet this year. They are: Aviva Weinstein, Natalie Ravitsky, Sonora DesRosiers, Evan Konikoff, Lucy Naiman, Liza Jane Price, Orion Dixon, Nora Seltz, Eytan Samuels, Max Braunstein, Max Naiman, Noah Parker, Lea Donner, Shiloh Gentry, and Tessa Cherry. These teens have spent most of their Sundays this year in the Keshet classrooms, assisting teachers and practicing skills toward becoming Jewish leaders.

Next Year:

The Keshet Admin team is working on making some changes for the coming year. The largest of these changes will be in expanding the Gan program to include a Mazel Tot program for students ages 0-3 years old. Gan will take place on all Keshet Sundays next year instead of half of them. With this change, we are considering changing the model for our youngest students to be more focused on the stages of our students as individuals, rather than their ages. More information about these changes will be coming to the community soon.

Keshet registration fees for 2025-2026 will be increasing by about 5% for all classes except for Mazel Tots and 7th Grade. The fee for 7th grade will go up slightly however when registering for the 2026-2027 Keshet year.

We are working to change the system in which we offer our registration form this year so that both the admin team and the Keshet families all have a smoother experience with it! On our new registration form, look out for opportunities to sign up to volunteer with events, as well as programs happening in the classrooms, and reading out loud in the Keshet library.

Registration for Keshet 2025-2026 opens on July 1st and offers an Early Bird discount through July 31st!

Thank you to this year's incredible Keshet Staff:
 Darcie Donegan
 Miles Sims
 Marcy Probst
 Elz Bulington
 Samantha Schwartz

Augi Moyer
 Jonah Dirks
 Miriam Buckman
 Mikayla Goodkin
 Jason Benhaim

Thank you also to KAG and the community of volunteers who made Kesher a priority this year! Our school couldn't possibly function without your help and support! And finally, thank you to the families who trust us with your child's Jewish education!

Facilities

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE & MANAGEMENT

Co-Chairs: Joshua Greenberg and Isaac Blum

Committee Members: Josh Greenberg, Katie Edelstein, Marta Brand, Isaac Konikoff, Karen Sloss, Dan Raas, Dan Ohms, Miriam Schwartz, and Tammy Dixon

The Facilities Maintenance & Management Committee (FMMC) is a coordinating committee, which means that it really is made up of representatives from other committees except for the Chairs who help run the meetings. The FMMC includes the chairs of Property & Grounds, Building Maintenance, Safety & Security, Technology, Interior Design, Events and Rentals, Legal & Liability. The committee also helps support Task forces that have been set up that also deal with the Facility, such as Kitchen and Irrigation Well Task forces. The underlying purpose of the Facilities Maintenance & Management Committee is to ensure that there is always open discussion and transparency between the various sub-committees to ensure that the decisions we make in the present for the future of the CBI community are carefully considered and impact us all in the best way possible.

Committee chairs bring decisions that need to be weighed or voted upon to the FMMC, often before they are presented to the Board of Directors. Ultimately, it's the committees and task forces that do the amazing work required to keep our synagogue building operating. It's the job of the Facilities Maintenance & Management Committee to keep sight of how these individual committees fit together like a mosaic and are accountable to budgetary and logistical constraints. Congregation Beth Israel is a large facility, and it takes a lot of coordination and cooperation behind the scenes to keep it running smoothly.

This year we are happy to report that the upstairs commercial kitchen was completed and is now being used. Also, the back patio area was updated to better support food trucks. We now have steps down to a lower level and electrical power was installed for food trucks to plug into. This provides more options for catering events, and we look forward to seeing how it will be used by our members. We received a grant from Homeland security to improve access to the lower parking lot and increased lighting along our South fence line. We hope to get permission to begin this work soon. This means to date we have secured over \$300k in grant funding to make our facility safer. We plan to submit again in 2025 to improve the safety of the Kesher classrooms. Many of our committees are looking for volunteers so be sure to reach out to them to help keep our facility in top shape.

MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Chair: Marta Brand

Kitchen Task Force

The commercial dishwasher is fun! A home dishwasher takes hours to run and then dishes may or may not be clean, but with a commercial dishwasher it only takes 2.5 minutes per cycle, and you can see the results right away!

We are determined as a task force to bring order to the kitchen and to impart our kitchen experience and knowledge to the rest of the congregants who will inevitably be helping to prepare and serve meals. We have made great progress with organizing, labeling and procedural signage. And we have just enlarged our kitchen task force so that we will have more smart people to refine the organization and help others to use the kitchen safely and efficiently.

This year we purchased 6 more metal carts which has enabled us to store dishes and plates downstairs until needed.

Real plates and flatware are now used, with individuals scraping their plates into the compost and placing them along with silverware in designated bins.

Each meal and event teach us valuable lessons. We appreciate your patience and support in helping us improve.

Thank-you Sarah Witte for all your valuable input and hard work on the task force.

The current task force members are Karen Sloss, Jodi Litt, Vicky Garfinkle, Nicole Samuels, and Shana Feiger.

Building Maintenance

Ken Weaver, our outstanding maintenance man, keeps our Synagogue in top shape inside and ensures the lawns stay pristine. Thanks to our dedicated Landscape Committee, the grounds become more beautiful each year. This winter, Ken successfully used the John Deere snow blade, saving us time and money. We're grateful to have him on staff.

INTERIOR DESIGN GROUP

Chair: Katie Edelstein

Committee Members: Vicki Jaffe, Vicky Garfinkle, Dan Ohms, Marla Finkelstein, Miriam Schwartz, and Cherryne Kravitz

The Interior Design Committee is a subcommittee of the Facilities, Maintenance and Management Committee initially formed to select and oversee interior design finishes during construction of the synagogue but now works in conjunction with other committees or groups regarding interior related issues.

During the past year, the committee focused its time and efforts on the bimah. To highlight this sacred place, the walls of the bimah were painted. Through the long-time dedication of CBI member Roby Blecker, the beautiful Seven Days of Creation needlepoint wall hangings were

created and installed on either side of the ark.

Another project the Interior Design Committee worked on included the design of a new lectern for the bimah. Interior Design Committee members collaborated with Tom Lutz of Tom Lutz Furniture, on a final design for a lectern. To complement the ark, Tom will utilize similar wood for the bimah lectern that he used to create the ark. This new lectern will be completed for the 2025 Jewish High Holidays.

In the coming months, the Interior Design Committee will also work with CBI member Ashley Mask. Ashley is the person responsible for beautifully displaying artwork collections by various CBI congregants. Over the last year, Rabbi Samuels has purchased several pieces of art from our congregants with the intention of having a permanent collection displayed in the upstairs hallway.

In the coming year, the Interior Design Committee is available to work in conjunction with any committee or group as it relates to interior design features of the synagogue.

COMMITTEES

CARE COMMITTEE

Chair: Else Sokol

Committee Members: Sylvia Williams, Geraldine Reitz, Joan Wayne, Becky Van Glubt, Tracey Levine, Jodi Litt, Jerome Rosen, Dennis Math, Sarah Witte, Deborah Oksenberg, and Nancy Luster. Our Board Liaison is Terry Weiner.

Sarah Witte has stepped down as Co-chair.

The Care Committee has engaged in another full and meaningful year of practicing G'milut Hasadim and Rachamim. We continue to provide meal trains, cards, support and check-in calls to those in need.

This past year we have accomplished the following:

- Provided regular visits, phone and other support for those on our Chavurim list: congregants and greater Jewish community members who are at risk for adverse emotional, spiritual and physical health consequences due to physical ailments, social isolation, or mental or physical disability.
- Traveled to Everett and sat with a dying congregant who was alone in the hospital, then attended shiva for them.
- One of our members organized and executed a move-out for this congregant after they passed, with the help of another CBI member.
- Organized meal trains for congregants with temporary needs for support.
- Organized dog walking assistance for a family in need.
- Organized and provided rides to appointments for congregants.
- Helped with grocery delivery and minor home tasks for those on our Chavurim List.
- Assisted with the delivery of Hanukkah goodies for our Chavurim members and the mishloach manot for Purim.
- Engaged and helped organize the Skagit Jewish group to provide assistance for an isolated congregant family with multiple ongoing unique health challenges.
- Organized a speaker to present April programming at CBI, which they ultimately cancelled due to registration numbers not meeting their expectations.
- Participated in the Nosh and Network event.

Plans for the coming year include continuation of our routine support for the community, including advocating for those in our congregation who, for whatever reason, are uncomfortable to return to CBI in-person, or who live in the north county and don't attend programming if it requires driving at night.

We encourage congregants who want or need support to contact us at carecommittee@bethisraelbellingham.org.

CEMETERY COMMITTEE & CHEVRA KADDISHA SUBCOMMITTEE

Chairs: Janis Ban (chair), Marcy Probst (chair of finances)

Committee Members: Diane Garmo, Dan Ohms, Cora Boothby

Members of *Chevra Kaddisha*:

Women: Diane Garmo, Cora Boothby, Janis Ban, Corinne Gimbel-Levine, Marcy Probst, Geraldine Reitz, Sarah Bauman, Miriam Schwartz, Andrea Shupack, and Teresa Sommers

Men: Emil Hecht, Steve Ban, Hank Levine, Barry Landau, Dan Ohms, Mark Weinstein, Miles Bryant, Todd Witte, Serge Lindner, and John Schapiro

Mission Statement of the Cemetery Committee:

- 1) Continue ongoing sale of cemetery plots
- 2) Provide ongoing community education on burial practices and end of life issues
- 3) Provide Chevra Kaddisha services as well as help families with burial arrangements, coordinating with Rabbi and Bayview Cemetery at the time of death
- 4) Ongoing maintenance of CBI cemetery
- 5) Maintenance of cemetery records, financial records and policies.

Cemetery Committee:

- Continued ongoing work of maintaining cemetery, responding to inquiries, helping families buy plots and deal with burial issues at time of death, facilitating details around setting headstones, arranging for Chevra Kaddisha services, etc. Since April 30, 2024 we have performed 0 Taharot, had 1 burial, sold 4 plots, and had 2 headstones installed.
- We continued working on the scatter garden plans.
- We arranged to invest our monies so they we could generate more income.
- We updated the End of Life Questionnaire on the CBI website.
- We created a fund for indigent burials to supplement the county's program if needed.
- We removed downed trees and made repairs to our fence and gate.
- Plans for next year:
- Create a scatter garden for cremains/Aquamains
- Work on installation of our old memorial plaques in the new building
- Continue ongoing work
- Revise Rules and Regulations document

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Karen Sloss

Committee Members: Steven Garfinkle and John Schapiro

The CBI Fundraising Committee oversees all fundraising efforts for CBI and stands ready to assist other committees in any fundraising aspects of their activities. In addition to the Committee's activities, CBI's Scrip Program (managed separately by Joan Wayne—please see the separate Scrip Report in this packet) is an ongoing fundraiser and Lindsey Genut manages

the annual Mishloach Manot (Purim) fundraiser dedicated to funding Keshet (Religious School) tuition scholarships.

The Annual HHD (High Holy Days) Drive helped fund several important needs at CBI. Donations in direct response to the solicitation were as follows:

\$30,192 Building Fund
 43,130 Endowment Fund
 10,860 Keshet Tuition Scholarship Fund
 5,930 Security Budget Support
 =====
 \$91,112 Total Annual HHD Drive Donations

The Fundraising Committee also began work on a new Building Fund Campaign which is needed to fund a rather long list of projects designed to complete and improve the synagogue campus. Additionally, a healthy reserve balance in the Building Fund is a high priority. The Committee set a goal of raising \$500,000 for the Building Fund over the next 2-3 years. This will give many members a fresh opportunity to support the ongoing “construction” of our new synagogue. Approximately \$400,000 will go towards specific projects while at least \$100,000 will remain as a “cushion” to cover major building repairs, equipment replacements and new projects in the future.

We are deeply grateful to the many members who generously donate to various funds or programs or general operations at CBI. Together with membership pledges and tuition payments, this extra support makes a huge, positive difference in our CBI experience. The Committee is actively seeking new members who either have or want to gain skills in fundraising, marketing, or business development.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Chair: Mitch Press

Committee Members: Erin Cohen, Josh Greenberg, Roby Blecker, Bruce VanGlabt

The Governance Committee makes recommendations to the Board regarding ways to improve the organizational structure, communication flow, and operations of the synagogue. The Committee is sometimes tasked by the Board to update an existing Board position description or CBI policy or to develop a specific policy if there is no existing policy document. Our overall goal is to make sure that we have consistent, fair, and consensual governance guidelines for CBI.

During the past few years, we focused on the structure of our CBI committees and clearly defining their purpose and functioning.

Over the last year, we worked with our committees to help them write their own charters for review and approval by the CBI Board of Directors. These charters summarize the purpose and responsibilities of each Committees. The Board has now approved the Charters for half of our committees and will continue the process during the next several months.

Special thanks go to Rena Zeigler, who recently stepped down after serving for many years as committee co-chair. She has helped us stay very focused during hours of discussion and debate as we've developed many CBI policies. Thanks also go to Ellen Smith who also recently stepped down.

HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Chair: Ellen Smith

Committee Members: Paul Blum, Dan Ohms, Roby Blecker, Bruce Van Glubt, and Jodi Litt.

The HR Committee has continued to assist in the yearly performance review process for CBI staff. This is the main mechanism for ensuring that employees of CBI are treated professionally, fairly and consistently. We have reviewed the process and updated the template used for anonymous feedback from Congregants so that the reviews are as accurate as possible. Our committee has updated our charter and completed a legal review of the CBI Employee Handbook.

Currently our committee is exploring the possibility of hiring an executive director to meet the future needs of our growing congregation.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Committee: Rob Lopresti, Tamar Clarke, Joan Wayne

We have an amazing collection of books in 3 locations: upstairs is the main adult library; prayer books, the Talmud and other scholarly books can be found in the Beit Midrash on the main floor; the children's library is near the classrooms

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Chair: Susan Mahar

Committee Members: Miriam Davids, Melissa Schapiro, Cierra Burkill, Carly Benhaim

Board Liaison: Miriam Davids

This year has been another year of growth as Beth Israel welcomed 27 new member units to our congregation and are ending the fiscal year with over 300 member families.

As your Membership committee our goals this year were to move to managing the entire member experience from application to retention ensuring a positive and engaged member base who feels valued and connected.

Our Welcoming process has evolved by engaging new members by phone and email once they are approved. We strive to meet with new members in person and welcome them with some treats including a CBI mug. We also had a very successful Ice Cream social in the summer and this year we hope to expand it to include the whole congregation.

During the High Holy Days, we were Greeters at Services and provided a plentiful Oneg. We started a new tradition of inviting new members to a Friday night service in the Spring and had a celebration potluck Oneg. This was very successful, and we hope to continue this every year.

In conclusion the committee would like to thank Rabbi Samuels, Sarah Cobb, and members of the Board for all their support. We are a small but mighty committee. If you are interested in joining our team, please reach out to any member of the committee.

ONEG COMMITTEE

Co-chairs: Sarah Witte & Joan Wayne

We all enjoy sharing a nosh or a potluck dinner with other congregants. The oneg committee creates the list that assigns oneg hosting dates to congregants and reminds them of their assigned dates. Hopefully the list will be included in the next Shofar. It can also be found on the website.

PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Co-chairs Melissa Schapiro and Emily Weiner

Committee Members: Erin Cohen (Board liaison), Sara Geballe, Dan Raas, Andrea Shupack, Ann Suloway, and Inka von Sternenfels

Mission: The Program Committee provides meaningful Jewish learning and experiences through our programs to the CBI and wider communities. We aim to use programming in a variety of ways, depending on the nature of each event we plan, to accomplish one or more of the following:

- build and strengthen the CBI community
- welcome students involved with Hillel
- attract unaffiliated Jews to CBI
- build relationships with the broader community

Our 2024-25 events bring congregants and non-congregants together for:

- Summer Sunday outdoor experience
- Wine tasting #2: Comparing Washington State and French wines (members only, plus friends)
- Concert: Red Thread
- Visual art exhibition & artist talk (by CBI member Beth Anna Margolis)
- Talk by Gila Fine, author of *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic: Rereading the Women of the Talmud*
- Cooking class # 2: Hawaiian class with Little Ferraro Kitchen (members only)
- Dec. 25th Chinese Dinner/Movie (members only)
- Presentation about Theodore Bikel by his widow, Aimee Ginsburg
- Beit Café in Mount Baker Theatre Encore Room (members only, plus friends)
- Photo Exhibition: HaTikva—The Struggle for Israel's Future (through Sept. 1); and associated talks:
 - o Smadar Ben-Natan (human rights lawyer)
 - o Rabbi Joshua Weinberg (URJ VP for Israel and Reform Zionism; Exec. Dir. of Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA)-May 13)
 - o Sam Sokol (Times of Israel correspondent) (scheduled for June 22, Zoom)
- Whiskey Tasting with Rabbi Samuels: 2 sessions (members only)

- Working with Rabbi Samuels: Scholarly talk about Purim during the Spanish Inquisition, as part of Shabbat service during Purim
- Field trip to 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle to see the musical Parade
- Participatory presentation by Maia Brown sponsored by Humanities Washington: “Measuring Mourning”

We have been especially pleased that different events have brought different attendees, including some members who rarely come to CBI activities.

Plans for future events include:

- One or more film showings
- Continuation of the visual art exhibitions featuring additional CBI members
- Dec. 25th Chinese Dinner/Movie
- Beit Café
- Wine tasting #3
- Cooking class #3
- Concert of Jewish music

As always, the Programming Committee welcomes your suggestions for events: Email Emily.Weiner@bethisraelbellingham.org or Melissa.Schapiro@bethisraelbellingham.org

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Chairs: Tammy Dixon and Dan Ohms

To say the Safety and Security committee has had a busy year might be a bit of an understatement, The SSC has worked together to organize several successful training courses here at CBI. Dan Ohms, one of the SSC co-chairs, led us in a Stop the Bleed and First Aid course earlier this year. We also coordinated two De-escalation courses. The first was held this fall and open to all CBI members; we were fortunate to have the Whatcom County Sheriff's Office leadership come out to our synagogue and host this amazing program. The second training was for our Keshet staff and led by Tammy Dixon, our other SSC co-chair. We are currently working with local first responders to hold an emergency response drill on our CBI campus, hopefully over the summer. Our committee members have also been busy working with our security staff, Risk Solutions, and the FMMC to apply for several security grants from Homeland Security and the URJ. Additionally, we have been collaborating closely with them to create an all-encompassing emergency response plan for CBI. We would like to thank the CBI community, the Rabbi and the Board of Directors for their support as we work to make our synagogue feel secure for us all.

SCRIP

Chair: Joan Wayne

The scrip program has been raising funds for Beth Israel for many years. It is easy to participate.

During the Covid crisis participation dropped and has not come back to pre-Covid amounts. To find out more about the scrip program or to purchase scrip contact Joan Wayne jawayne2@gmail.com.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The Social Action Committee is in the process of regrouping, and we appreciate your patience. Stay tuned for updates in 2025/2026—we're excited for what's ahead!