



# Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

## THE CAS NEWSLETTER

## February 2026

### Upcoming services and events

**Sunday, February 1 at 2:00 PM:** Congregational Retreat at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire  
1089 Main Street, Housatonic, MA

**Friday, February 6 at 5:00 PM:** Kabbalat Shabbat Service and Candle Lighting via Zoom

**Saturday, February 7 at 10:00 AM:** Service in honor of Tu B'Shevat, location TBD

**Monday, February 9 at 5:00 PM:** February Board Meeting via Zoom

**Wednesday, February 11 at 10:00 AM:** Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

**Monday, February 16 at 12:00 PM:** Memoir Workshop with Barbara Janoff via Zoom  
**7:00 PM:** Photography Workshop with Arthur Hillman via Zoom

**Wednesday, February 18 at 10:00 AM:** Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

**Friday, February 20 at 5:00 PM:** Kabbalat Shabbat Service, TBD

**Saturday, February 21 at 10:00 AM:** Traditional Shabbat Service, TBD

**Wednesday, February 25 at 10:00 AM:** Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

**Friday, February 27 at 5:00 PM:** Kabbalat Service and Candle Lighting via Zoom

### This month's newsletter features:

**Congregation Ahavath Sholom Retreat**

**Upcoming Events**

***My Conversion:* Marie Rudden**

**A Journey Through the Siddur with Rabbi Rudin**

**Save the Date: *Joey Weisenberg in Concert*, a CAS fundraiser**

**Notes from the January Board Meetings**

**February Creative Arts Workshops**

**February Yahrzeits**

**Donations**

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COMMUNITY



# CONGREGATION AHAVATH SHOLOM RETREAT



Join us to :

- learn about the state of our building
- think about 'What makes us us'
- hear about new temporary space
- dream about our future



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026

2:00 – 5:00 PM



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# UPCOMING EVENTS

FEB  
20  
26

01

**Congregational Meeting**

2-5 PM IN PERSON



04,  
18, 20

**Cafe Kehilah - Virtual Coffee Chat**

10:00 AM



06

**Zoom Kabbalat Shabbat**

5:00 PM



07

**Shabbat Service and Tu B'Shevat Seder**

10:00 AM  
LOCATION TBD



20

**Shabbat Morning Services**

10:00 AM LOCATION TBD



21

**Kabbalat Shabbat**

5:00 PM LOCATION TBD



27

**Zoom Kabbalat Shabbat**

5:00 PM



## My Conversion: Marie Rudden



### My conversion

After attending services at CAS for a few years, I decided that I had found a deeply caring and spiritual home. A year ago, I told Rabbi Emerita Barbara Cohen and our current Rabbi Jennifer Rudin that I wanted to convert to Reconstructionist Judaism.

My background is Catholic, and then Quaker; my husband Pete is Jewish. We had observed the Jewish holidays together with friends for years. We joined the Village Synagogue in New York City when our child, Adrienne, was 12 so that they could take Hebrew classes. Adrienne wanted to do this: they had always considered themselves to be Jewish, and I deeply wanted her to have a spiritual identity and community. When learning Hebrew was difficult for them, Pete, Adrienne and I met monthly with a dear friend who teaches Hebrew School on Manhattan's Upper West Side to read stories from the Tanakh together. Adrienne went to Israel through the Birthright program and had a Bat Mitzvah at the Wailing Wall. After an Affirmation Ceremony at Knesset Israel in Pittsfield, Adrienne joined that synagogue three years ago.

After we moved to the Berkshires in 2001, I joined a small Quaker Meeting in Lenox, but it closed after a few years due to deaths and moves by members, I continued to look for a spiritual home. Witnessing the funeral services of two dear friends led by Rabbi Barbara Cohen, I became intrigued. She obviously knew them well, and the services were beautiful. I met with Barbara afterwards and she suggested that I come to Services at CAS. Once I did, I found them to be moving and began reading more deeply about the foundations and practices of Judaism, and particularly Reconstructionist Judaism. I took two courses with Rabbi James Ponet at the Yale Alumni College, and two on American Jewish Literature and on memoirs written by European Jews from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Then, a year ago, I told both Rabbi Cohen and Rabbi Rudin that I wanted to convert. Rabbi Rudin gave me a list of readings she suggested, and I met with her regularly. I wound up adding other readings and learned to read Hebrew through a book the Rabbi gave me, at least enough to decipher and then read certain prayers.

My conversion ceremony occurred on January 22 at the Mayyim Hayyim Mikvah in Newton MA, accompanied by my husband, two friends and Rabbi Rudin. My Beit Din discussions were extremely enjoyable, and the experience of the Mikvah, along with the beautiful prayers suggested, left me in somewhat of a trance. They were simply beautiful: "May the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart, and this act of immersion seal my devotion to a life of Torah, a life of service, and a life made holy by acts of loving kindness. "After the third immersion I prayed, "Holy One of Blessing, You have made me a Jew."

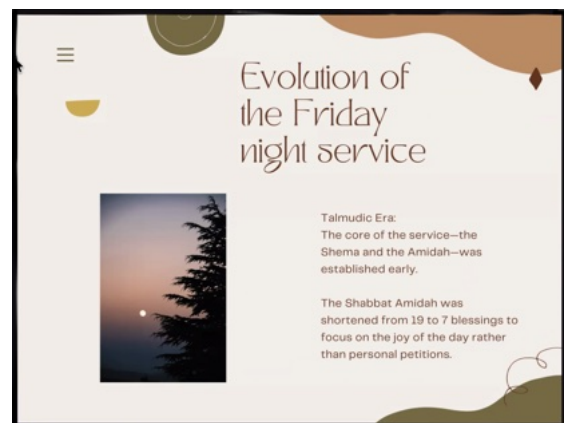
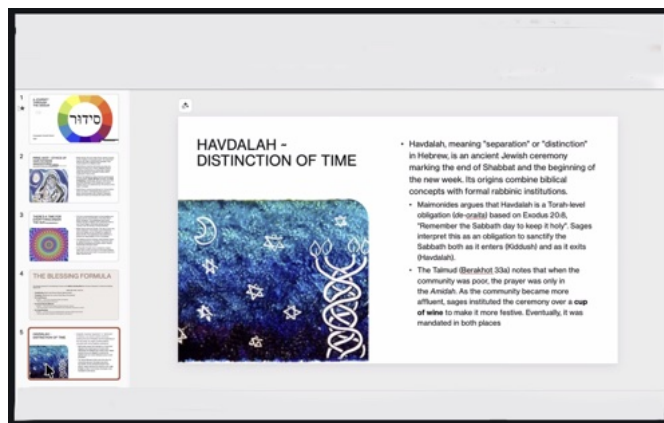
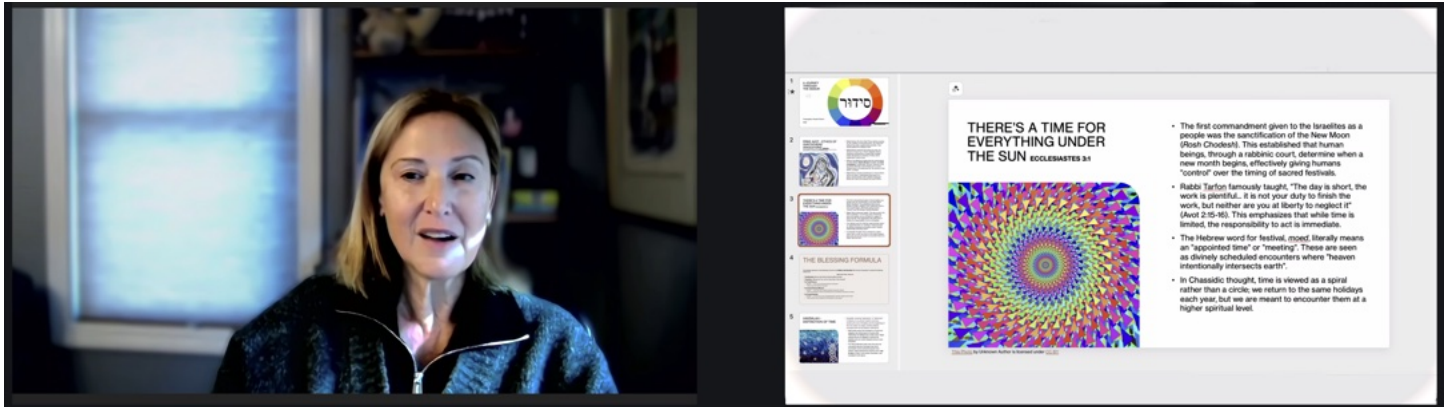
A beautiful Shabbat evening service and celebration occurred the next day, when I was blessed again by Rabbi Rudin, who declared the Hebrew name that I have chosen, Miriam. Now my journey to find a spiritual home has both ended and begun.

Marie Rudden

# A Journey Through the Siddur with Rabbi Rudin



On two recent Sundays, January 11th and 25<sup>th</sup>, Rabbi Rudin led an enthusiastic group of members and guests through our continuing zoom series *Journey Through the Siddur*. We continued to explore the structure, themes, rituals of **Kabbalat Shabbat** and **Havdalah** learning from the Rabbi's presentations and the group's questions and discussions.



In Part Four of Journey through the Siddur, we explored the six psalms of Kabbalat Shabbat. The psalms are designed to take you on a journey from Havdalah to the next Kabbalat Shabbat. We hope you enjoy these melodies!

L'chu Neranena <https://youtu.be/wHF-4EIIl> Q?si=9kFTc3YGyFKXbFE9  
Shiru L'Adonai <https://youtu.be/gOCszJXUSRg>?si=flkq8rwlTITFI98l  
Or Zaruah <https://youtu.be/RRMkSW3dJNM>?si=eZIYPGHYZBDStd4y  
Zamru L'Adonai <https://youtu.be/6GgrxmQ73A4>?si=DkY5SRQ6Rb9lPoXx  
Romemu <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=yQdQ1xL8M7l&si=tWIS5GBswEOor5tE>  
Mizmor Shir <https://youtu.be/RorTgwYagt4>?si=7KYi0ePEH9RRcOPE

## Save the Date: *Joey Weisenberg in Concert*

We're excited to announce that tickets are now on sale for our highly anticipated fundraiser, "Joey Weisenberg in Concert," happening on May 17th! Join us for an incredible afternoon filled with music, song, and a sense of community. Joey Weisenberg is known for his mesmerizing performances, and his concerts tend to sell out fast, so don't wait—secure your tickets today!

We have ticket prices that make it accessible for everyone: just \$36 for students, \$72 for adults, and a premium option at \$180 for our supporters. Those who opt for the supporter ticket will receive special recognition, with their names proudly displayed in our playbill, and are invited to a pre-concert brunch at the home of an Ahavath Sholom member.

Purchase tickets beginning on February 1<sup>st</sup> at <https://joeyweisenberginconcert.eventbrite.com>

"Music is Breath, Song is Life"

### JOEY WEISENBERG IN CONCERT

Sunday, May 17, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre  
at SHAKESPEARE  
& COMPANY

*We invite you to join  
Congregation Ahavath Sholom  
for a memorable afternoon filled with song, inspiration, and spirituality.  
Experience a vibrant, participatory celebration as we welcome multi-talented Joey Weisenberg,  
the founder and director of Hadar's Rising Song Institute, making his debut appearance in the Berkshires.*

Order tickets at <https://joeyweisenberginconcert.eventbrite.com>

A virtuosic multi-instrumental musician, singer, and composer, Joey Weisenberg has devoted himself to opening up the sounds of people singing together in community. The founder and director of Hadar's Rising Song Institute, which aims to cultivate the grassroots musical-spiritual creativity of the Jewish people, Joey works to educate and train communities worldwide to unlock their musical-spiritual potential and make music a vibrant, joy-filled force in Jewish life. Joey is the author of *Building Singing Communities*, a practical guide to bringing people together in song, as well as *The Torah of Music*, a treasury of Jewish teachings and insights about the spiritual nature of music, which received the National Jewish Book Award in 2017. A devoted student and teacher of ancient and traditional Jewish melodies, Joey composes new nigunim that have moved and inspired Jews worldwide. He has released eight albums of original music, most recently *L'eila*, available on Rising Song Records.

# Notes from the January Board Meetings

January 12, 2026

- Rabbi Rudin offered a message of concern and hope in the face of recent national and international events. She also noted our sadness about the death of the daughter of Rev. Carol Killian, minister of the United Church of Pittsfield, and a long-time friend and member of our congregation.
- Mr. Ed Wagner, a certified mold inspector from Easthampton, MA, elaborated on his recent written report to the Board. He said that the problem is rooted in the high moisture levels in the basement. Because of the dirt floor and stone foundation, long-term mitigation will require significant investments to properly seal and ventilate the space. He strongly encouraged us to gain the services of a mechanical engineer before taking any steps to address the situation. Based on Mr. Wagner's report, it was the consensus of the Board that we need to stay out of the building for the time being, and to identify possible locations for a temporary home for the congregation.
- Thanks were given to Susan Weinstein for helping out with the mail during Arthur Hillman's vacation, to John Slote for cleaning the Ark, and to the several members of the congregation who assisted with the examination of the Torahs.
- 



## Special Meeting: January 26, 2026

- Joan Burkhard noted that inquiries at several possible alternative locations in South County showed them to be either unavailable or cost prohibitive. The one exception was the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire in Housatonic. A tour of the building by members of the Executive Committee and the Rabbi determined that it was indeed a viable option. The Board voted unanimously to open negotiations with the UUMSB to rent space through the end of 2026, and possibly longer.
- Responsibility for financial transactions and record keeping is being moved to the accountancy firm of Orenstein & Company, LLC and Sonia Orenstein Barile with whom the Board has recently contracted. This is a gradual process, however, and Arthur Hillman continues to take care of various day-to-day matters.
- The fourth meeting of the Hadar Caring Committee group is upcoming. Rabbi Rudin hopes to promote a sense of shared community within the congregation and strongly encourages members to let her know about significant events in their lives.
- A Tu B'Shevat service will be held at the Friends Meeting House in Great Barrington on Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM, location to be determined.
- Of the six Torahs owned by the congregation, three are damaged but repairable, and three are beyond repair. The Rabbi has identified someone who can examine the damaged Torahs and advise us on how to proceed and on possible expenses. Because Jewish tradition discourages use of damaged Torahs, Rabbi Rudin will bring a Torah of her own to services.
- Because many of our prayerbooks and Torah commentaries are damaged, the Board authorized the Religious and Spiritual Life Committee to pursue the purchase of approximately 20 and 15 books, respectively.

## February Creative Arts Workshops

The next **Memoir Writing Workshop** is scheduled for Monday, February 16th at noon via Zoom. Shared readings and short writing exercises. Each of these sessions is stand-alone. Please RSVP to Barbara Janoff at [bjanoff1@gmail.com](mailto:bjanoff1@gmail.com). Suggested donation to CAS is \$10 to support our Creative Arts Programs.

*Barbara Janoff Ph.D. is retired from the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York in Manhattan, where she taught writing and literature. Her poetry and essays have appeared in a number of journals, including Communication Arts, Women's Work: The Journal of the Columbia College Women's Center and the Berkshire Review.*

The next **Photography Workshop** will take place on Monday, February 16th, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Participants in the workshop can submit any images they would like discussed, regardless of subject matter or content, using phone or camera. They can also share their screen with the group. These workshops are stand-alone sessions, open to all. Please RSVP to [arthurhillman54@gmail.com](mailto:arthurhillman54@gmail.com). Suggested donation to CAS is \$10 to support our Creative Arts Programs.

*Photographer and printmaker Arthur Hillman has been exhibiting his prints for more than 60 years. He has delivered a variety of lectures and presentations on photography and printmaking, juried many exhibits, and was a founding member of the Berkshire Photography Group. He is Professor Emeritus, Photography, Printmaking and Design, Bard College at Simon's Rock.*



*Photograph by Michele Waldman from the January CAS Photography Workshop*

## February Yahrzeits

***Much of our experience of divine goodness, grace and love has come to us through those whose lives have touched our own.***

	Hebrew Date	Secular Date	This Year
Martin B. Slater	Shevat 22 5767	2/10/2007	2/9
Lewis Cohn	Shevat 23 5776	2/2/2016	2/10
Joseph Karelitz	Shevat 26 5743	2/9/1983	2/13
David V. Schenker	Shevat 27 5753	2/18/1993	2/14
Sherwin Fink	Adar 03 5776	2/12/2016	2/20
Helen Weiner	Adar 04 5766	3/4/2006	2/21
Sonia Ziperkowski Witkowski	Adar 05 5768	3/12/2008	2/22
Martin Sagan	Adar 07 5771	3/12/2011	2/24
Emma Mainker Graubard	Adar 07 5660	6-Feb	2/24
Hannah Meltzer Greenside	Adar 10 5753	3/3/1993	2/27
Stanley Clarin	Adar 10 5759	2/25/1999	2/27

## Donations

### **In honor of Marie Rudden's Conversion**

Sandra and Bill Flannery  
Susan and Tom Hicks  
Louise and Arthur Hillman  
Dawn and Dean McKay  
Daltrey Turner

### **In memory of Judy, Carol Killian's daughter**

Susan and Tom Hicks  
Louise and Arthur Hillman

### **In memory of Marty Stransky**

Sandra and Bill Flannery

### **In memory of Barbara Barron**

Sandra and Bill Flannery

### **In memory of Hattie Greenside**

Roberta Scheinmann and Mindy Greenside

### **To replace damaged prayer books**

The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

### **End-of-year/Annual Appeal**

Joseph B. Gellert  
Susan and Tom Hicks

### **General Contributions**

Stuart Greenberg  
Dawn and Dean McKay  
Marie Rudden  
Debbie Slater

### **In support of the Creative Arts Workshops**

Lauren Behrman  
Ross Bettinger  
Bruce Frishkoff  
Linda Geffin  
Arthur Hillman  
Barbara Janoff  
Carol Killian  
Marie Rudden  
Stephanie Sloane

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