



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

THE CAS NEWSLETTER

August 2026

Upcoming services and events

Wednesday, August 5 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Thursday, August 6 at 5:00 PM: Learn to Chant Torah with Rabbi Rudin

7:00 PM: Poetry Workshop with Jaynee Benjulian in West Stockbridge

Saturday, August 8 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat Service at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire

12:00 PM: Sound the Shofar with Dan Burkhard

Sunday, August 9 at 11:00 AM: Journey Through the Machzor, Session 4, with Rabbi Rudin, via Zoom

Monday, August 10 at 5:00 PM: August Board meeting

Wednesday, August 12 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Monday, August 17 at 12:00 PM: Memoir Workshop with Barbara Janoff via Zoom

Wednesday, August 19 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Thursday, August 20 at 5:00 PM: Learn to Chant Torah with Rabbi Rudin

Friday, August 21 at 5:00 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire

Saturday, August 22 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat Service at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire

Monday, August 24 at 7:00 PM: Photography Workshop with Arthur Hillman via Zoom

Wednesday, August 26 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Thursday, August 27 at 5:00 PM: Learn to Chant Torah with Rabbi Rudin

The Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire is located at 1089 Main Street, Housatonic, MA

This month's newsletter features

The 2026 Annual Meeting

The High Holidays

High Holy Days at CAS are open to everyone!

Sound the Shofar – Tekiah Gedolah! with CAS

Notes from the July Board Meeting

From the Photography Workshop

August Yahrzeits

Donations

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The 2026 Annual Meeting

Congregation Ahavath Sholom held our Annual Meeting on Sunday July 26th at 4:00 p.m., in our current home at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire in Housatonic, MA.

These are Rabbi Jennifer Rudin's opening comments:

Welcome and thank you for being here for the CAS Annual Meeting. There are many things that make this congregation unique, but three stand out to me in particular: your willingness to show up for one another, your readiness to step forward whenever help is needed, and the passion and commitment you bring to this community. Those qualities have been on full display over the past year.

It was only a short time after my installation as your rabbi that we discovered mold in our North Street building. Soon afterward, we learned that several of our sacred Torah scrolls had sustained water and mold damage. Then came the difficult realization that, for the health and well-being of our congregation, we needed to leave the building we have called home.

That was unsettling. We grieved the loss. We searched for our footing in the midst of unexpected change.

Yet even in that uncertainty, this community showed its strength.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of a dedicated group of volunteers, we found a temporary home here, where our hosts have welcomed us with extraordinary generosity. Rather than simply waiting for the crisis to pass, we leaned into our mission. We expanded our programming, created new opportunities for learning both in person and online, traveled together, celebrated together, and continued to care for one another. We worked hard to preserve the spirit of this community, even when we could not gather in our own building.

It has not been easy. There have been countless meetings, difficult conversations, and many hours of work behind the scenes. I want you to know that throughout this transition, people have been thinking carefully, thoughtfully, and prayerfully about how best to guide our congregation through this moment.

Because we are not simply an organization. We are not a corporation or a social club.

We are a spiritual home.

And when a spiritual home is disrupted, it affects us deeply. This temporary displacement—and the important decisions we face about our future—touch our memories, our identities, and our hopes. It is appropriate to acknowledge that this has been, and continues to be, an emotional journey.

This afternoon, we will reflect on the past year and look toward the future. We'll hear about the work of our committees, including the Building Committee, so ably led by Jayne Benjulian. We'll learn about the Board's priorities for the coming year. There will be much to celebrate, and there may also be information that is difficult to hear.

As we begin, I would ask one thing of all of us.

Let us approach one another with gratitude for the work that has been done on behalf of this congregation. Let us ask questions from a place of curiosity rather than assumption. Let us trust that, even when we disagree, we are united by our shared love for this community and our sincere desire to see Congregation Ahavath Sholom flourish.

If we can do that—if we can listen generously, speak respectfully, and remember that we are on the same team—I have every confidence that we will not only weather this season of transition, but emerge from it stronger than before.

I would like to close with words from our tradition that feel especially meaningful today:

"Adonai, guard my tongue from speaking evil and my lips from speaking deceit. Help me turn away from what is harmful and pursue what is good. May I be among those who seek peace and pursue it."

May these words guide our conversations this afternoon and the work we continue to do together.

The meeting provided an overview of synagogue events and activities from the past year, including reports from the various committees. There was also a power point presentation concerning our building situation. As most of you know, a major issue confronting us now is what to do about a building that has some serious environmental and structural problems. An opportunity for further conversation will be offered at a town hall meeting. A final decision about the building will be the result of a closed-ballot vote by members of the congregation.

A potluck dinner organized by Alison Adams-Weinberg followed the meeting.

Note: A copy of the power point presentation mentioned above is now on the CAS website along with reports, studies, proposals and information sheets about our current building and other future possibilities. The Building Committee will continue to include relevant materials, as they arrive, to this Documentation section of the Members' Page.

High Holidays at CAS

By the High Holiday Committee, Congregation Ahavath Sholom

You know what they say about silver linings and turning lemons into lemonade. This year at Congregation Ahavath Sholom, we had to live those sayings as we forged a path forward after water damage to our building in Great Barrington forced us to find another space to gather. At CAS, we like to say, "The Creative Spirit Lives Here." We used our creativity and, being the participatory community we are, put our heads together and came up with a plan for how to move forward. We were so fortunate to find a temporary home at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of Southern Berkshire in Housatonic. We have had the opportunity to come together over the last few months, not only with our own CAS family, but also with members of the very welcoming UUMSB community.

With the challenge of being displaced from our building, we saw opportunity. The larger space at UUMSB allows us, this High Holiday season, to invite our neighbors from across the Berkshires to join us for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services at no charge (donations will be greatly appreciated).



Rabbi Jennifer Rudin and Rabbi Jeff Eisenstat will lead services. Each will bring their own musical inspiration and many years of experience. Rabbi Rudin will bring to services the melodies of Hadar's Rising Song Institute, which cultivates Jewish spiritual life through song. She has a decade of experience leading Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur services. Rabbi Eisenstat has led High Holiday services since he was a child in Junior Congregation at Temple Israel in Scranton, PA in 1959! Drawing on his experience as the founder of Camp JRF (now Camp Havaya), the Reconstructionist Movement's overnight camp, and years spent leading services in various congregations, he will bring us melodies from Reconstructionist communities and camp.

This year, there will also be an afternoon family service on the second day of Rosh HaShanah that includes Tashlich. After a short walk to the water, we will return to the building for apples & honey, songs, prayers, and shofar blowing.

Here is our schedule of services:

Erev Rosh HaShanah: Friday, September 11 at 7 pm

Rosh HaShanah: Saturday, September 12 at 10 am

Rosh HaShanah Family Service & Tashlich: Sunday, September 13 at 2:30 pm

Kol Nidre: Sunday, September 20 at 7 pm

Yom Kippur: Monday, September 21 at 10 am and at 5 pm for Neilah, followed by a **Potluck Break-fast**

Erev Sukkot & Kabbalat Shabbat: September 25 at 5 pm, followed by a **Potluck Dinner**

Sukkot & Shabbat: September 26 at 10 am, followed by Kiddush in the Sukkah

Shemini Atzeret & Kabbalat Shabbat: October 2 at 5 pm

Simchat Torah & Shabbat: October 3 at 10 am

Pre-registration required; please email casoffice15@gmail.com. Call Rabbi Jennifer Rudin at 508-333-1991 with any questions. Security will be provided. Visit us on the Web at <https://www.ahavathsholom.com/> to learn more about our congregation.

High Holy Days at CAS are open to everyone!

**Maybe You're a
Reconstructionist...
and Don't Know It
Come find out this
High Holy Day Season!**



**Congregation Ahavath Sholom is opening its doors for free
High Holy Day services. Experience it for yourself.**

What if Judaism could be deeply rooted in tradition and speak to your life today?

At Congregation Ahavath Sholom, a Reconstructionist community, we embrace Jewish tradition as a living, evolving source of meaning. Through prayer, music, learning, reflection, poetry, and community, we create High Holy Day experiences that are spiritually rich, intellectually engaging, and warmly welcoming.

**Join us for a full High Holiday experience led by
Rabbi Jennifer Rudin and Rabbi Jeffrey Eisenstat**

Fri. Sept. 11, Erev Rosh HaShanah 7:00 PM Sat. Sept. 12 Rosh HaShanah 10:00 AM

Family Service Sun., Sept. 13 Rosh HaShanah 2:30 PM

Sun. Sept. 20 Kol Nidre 7:00 PM.

Mon. Sept. 21 Yom Kippur 10:00 AM

Mon. Sept. 21 Neilah 5:00 PM followed by a Pot Luck Break-Fast

Whoever you are. Wherever you're coming from. You're at home at CAS.

No membership required. All are welcome. Donations appreciated.

**Pre-registration required, casoffice15@gmail.com. For more information call Rabbi Rudin,
508-333-1991. Congregation Ahavath Sholom, The Creative Spirit Dwells Here**



Visit our website to learn more.



Sound the Shofar – Tekiah Gedolah! with CAS

Historically, the sound of Tekiah Gedolah is both earthly and Divine. It emanates from an animal horn and makes the same noise that was heard on the top of Mount Sinai when God addressed the people.

Do you have a desire to learn how to blow the Shofar? Do you wish you could make a mighty blast at High Holiday services? Bring your Shofar, or borrow one, to Congregation Ahavath Sholom at 1089 Main Street in Housatonic on August 8th at 12:00 PM and learn how to make the ram's horn cry out. We'll make a mighty sound together!

RSVP to casoffice15@gmail.com



Notes from the July Board Meeting

1. The 2025-26 fiscal year ended with a surplus of \$250.
2. The congregation currently counts 56 member units (family and individual memberships).
3. After nomination to the Board, Marie Rudden was elected to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Debbie Slater. She will be presented for a full term at the Annual Meeting.
4. One estimate of the cost of reducing the size (and weight) of our one usable Torah is \$3000, plus an additional \$800-\$1000 for a cover. Decisions will need to be made about our three damaged and unusable Torahs which are currently stored at a member's home.
5. Rosh Hashanah services will be Sept. 11 at 7:00 p.m., Sept. 12 at 10:00 a.m. and at 2:30 p.m. (family). Yom Kippur services will be Sept. 20 at 7:00 p.m. and Sept. 21 at 10:00 a.m. and at 5:00 p.m. There will be limited handicapped parking behind the building and many additional spaces along Main Street.
6. The Security Committee will be consulting with a private company to ensure the safety of the congregation during High Holy Day services.
7. Jayne Benjulian will be conducting a poetry workshop in advance of the High Holidays.
8. Dan Burkhard and Molly Souede are continuing their work to transfer book plates from old and damaged prayer books to newly acquired ones.

From the Photography Workshop



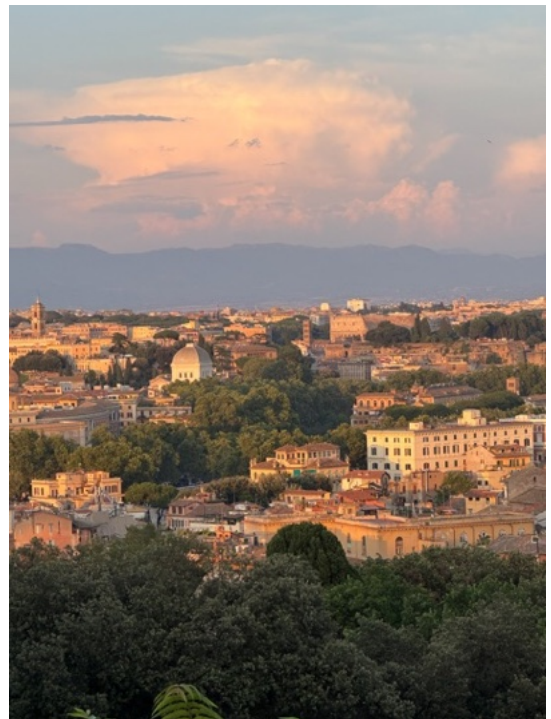
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PHOTOGRAPH BY JUDY SEAMAN



PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROLINE FORSMAN



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF ZIMMERMAN



PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHELE WALDMAN



PHOTOGRAPH BY KARLTON KEMERAIT

August 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
Doris Deborah Kassler	Av 20 5730	8/22/1970	8/3
Al Silverstein	Av 21 5767	8/5/2007	8/4
Rebecca Isserson	Av 25 5757	8/28/1997	8/8
Beatrice Alson	Av 27 5769	8/17/2009	8/10
Marjory Horwitz	Av 28 5776	9/1/2016	8/11
Conrad H. Yarmoff	Elul 3 5776	9/6/2016	8/16
Bea Guralnick	Elul 6 5775	8/21/2015	8/19
Nathan Horwitz	Elul 6 5754	8/13/1994	8/19
Leo Kaplan	Elul 08 5754	8/15/1994	8/21
Dorothy Siegel	Elul 8 5773	8/14/2013	8/21
Benjamin Pilcer	Elul 09 5773	8/15/2013	8/22
Chaim Witkowski	Elul 10 5762	8/18/2002	8/23
Caroline Mullen	Elul 12 5759	8/24/1999	8/25
Lillian Kipnis	Elul 13 5780	9/2/2020	8/26
Benjamin Kipnis	Elul 17 5769	9/5/2009	8/30

Donations

In memory of Steve Radin

Louise and Arthur Hillman
Michele Waldman

In loving memory of my husband, Al Silverstein

Barbara Janoff

In memory of Conrad H. Yarmoff

Susan and Tom Hicks

In honor of Sophie Jadow

Joan and Dan Burkhard

Yizkor

Dawn & Dean McKay
Gail Altman-Orenstein

For new prayer books

Eve Jennings

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Deborah Slater

In support of the Creative Arts Workshops

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