Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

THE CAS NEWSLETTER November 2026

Upcoming services and events

Wednesday, November 4 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Friday, November 6 at 5:00 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat at UUMSB

Saturday, November 7 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat Service at UUMSB

Monday, November 9 at 5:00 PM: CAS Board Meeting at UUMSB

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

Thursday, November 12 from 3:00-5:00 PM: Poetry Workshop with Jayne Benjulian at UUMSB

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

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

Thursday, November 19 from 3:00-5:00 PM: Poetry Workshop with Jayne Benjulian at UUMSB

Friday, November 20 at 5:00 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat at UUMSB

Saturday, November 21 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat Service at UUMSB

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

The Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB)
is located at 1089 Main Street, Housatonic

This month's newsletter features

Sharing Memories: Words and Images

Let All That Breathes Praise: Musical Instruments in Our Services

When a Torah No Longer Can Be Read

Online Congregational Meeting on November 16th

Save the Date: Chanukah Party for Members

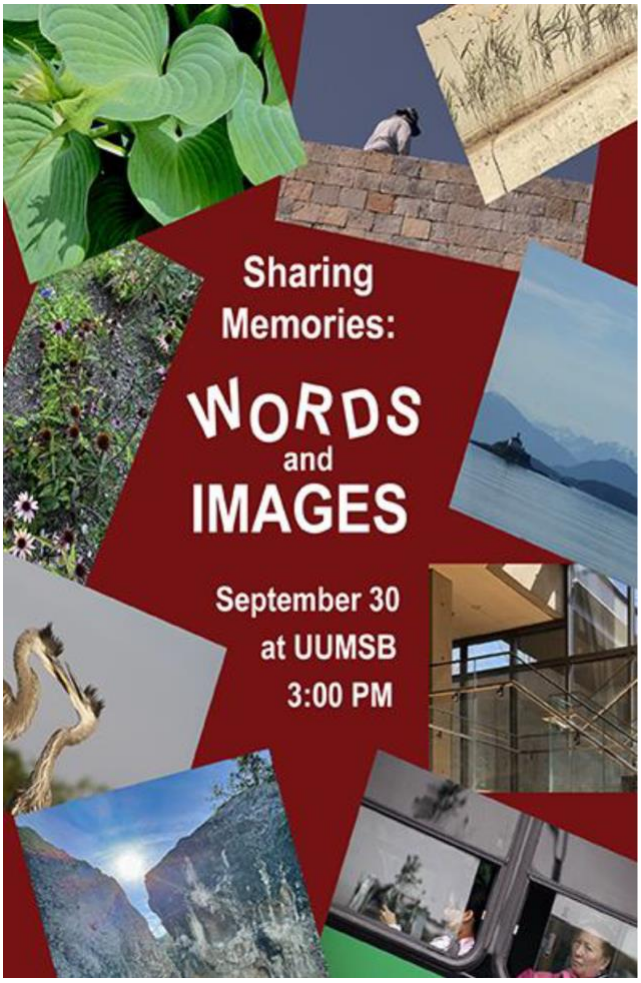
Notes from the October Board Meeting

November Yahrzeits

Donations

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Sharing Memories: Words and Images







Welcome to *Sharing Memories: Words and Images*, hosted by the Creative Arts Team of Congregation Ahavath Sholom. This special afternoon will feature essays and poems written by members of our memoir-writing group, brought to life by three talented local actors. Additionally, we will showcase a collection of photographs from our photography group.

Our Memoir Workshop, directed by Barbara Janoff, and our Photography Workshop, led by Arthur Hillman, have been meeting monthly for eight years, and this presentation is a selection of their creative efforts. We invite you to enjoy an afternoon of creativity and community.

The Photographers

Barbara Barron (In Memorium)

Bill Barth

Caroline Forsman

Arthur Hillman

Barbara Janoff

Karlton Kemerait

Judy Seaman

Michele Waldman

Jeff Zimmerman

The Memoir Program

3 Poems by Carol Killian:

Why
Read by Frederikke Borge

Messed Up
Read by Gail Ryan

Enough
Read by Sam Bittman

Special Ed, written by Marie Rudden
Read by Frederikke Borge

My Father, written by Arthur Hillman
Read by Sam Bittman

Lake Buel, written by Stephanie Sloane
Read by Gail Ryan

When Did I Become an Old Man, written by Arthur Hillman
Read by Sam Bittman

Little Shul, written by Linda Geffin
Read by Gail Ryan

Roommates, written by Arthur Hillman
Read by Sam Bittman

The Last Hike by Linda Geffin
Read by Frederikke Borge

Let All That Breathes Praise: Musical Instruments in Our Services

Every Friday night we sing Psalm 92, the Song for the Shabbat Day. Every Shabbat morning we sing Psalm 150. Both are full of instruments: the ten-stringed lute, the harp, the lyre, the shofar, the drum, the cymbals. And we often sing them with our voices alone. So, what does it mean to sing about harps without ever hearing one?

That question opened our recent community conversation on the role of musical instruments in our Shabbat and holiday services. Then we turned to one another and shared a service that had stayed with us.

Our lens was Reconstructionist. Mordecai Kaplan taught that Judaism is an evolving religious civilization, and that the past has a vote, not a veto. We distinguished halacha ("the way we walk," Jewish law) from minhag, custom that grows up within a community and changes as that community lives. That line has always been porous. The tradition teaches that custom can set aside law, and it also urges us to hold fast to the custom of our ancestors.

Then we traced the texts through time. The Temple was full of music — harps, flutes, cymbals — and on Shabbat the Levites sang Psalm 92. After the Temple's destruction, the rabbis restricted instruments on Shabbat and festivals for three reasons: to protect Shabbat rest, to mourn what was lost, and to keep Jewish worship distinct. Yet communities kept choosing. In the 1600s, Prague congregations welcomed Shabbat with musicians before sundown. In 1818, Hamburg's organ sparked a fierce rabbinic debate. We sometimes have guitar Kabbalat Shabbat and this year, a cello at Kol Nidre, each decided locally.

Using the attached slide deck as a guide, we talked. No decision was made. This was the learning and listening stage of our Values-Based Decision Making process: naming the question, learning together, naming our values, hearing every voice. Next come a follow-up survey and, later, a gathering to weigh options and decide together.



If you missed the conversation, your voice still matters. Please make your way through the slide presentation on our website https://www.ahavathsholom.com and then, reach out, we want to hear your voice.

When a Torah No Longer Can Be Read

Congregation Ahavath Sholom holds more sifrei Torah than we can use. Some are damaged beyond repair. Some would be costly to repair. And all carry our memories. A Torah is written to be read, and some of ours can no longer serve that purpose. Deciding what to do with them is a question of law, of lived practice and of the heart.

We had planned to begin this conversation on Zoom, but the session has been postponed and will be rescheduled in December. In the meantime, here is a preview of what we will explore together.

We will begin with the texts. The Torah forbids erasing God's name, and that prohibition is the root of genizah, the sacred storing away of holy writings. The Talmud teaches that a worn-out Torah is buried beside a scholar and honored like a teacher. Maimonides set the rules for when a scroll becomes unfit, and then, when a community without a kosher scroll needed one, he ruled that they could still read from it. The code says one thing, and a real community's need says another. Two terms matter here: pasul, unfit but often fixable by a sofer, and shebalah, worn past repair.

Then we will look at what other communities have done, and burial is only one path. Scrolls have been repaired and rededicated with a siyyum. They have been lent to communities with no Torah of their own. They have become teaching scrolls, so that students can unroll one, touch it with a yad and practice from it. Some are displayed as memorials. The 1,564 Czech Memorial Scrolls, gathered in Prague during the Nazi occupation, found second lives in congregations around the world.

We will also look at ritual. However we decide, each scroll deserves a farewell, or a welcome into its next life.

Finally, we will name our values: kavod haTorah, honor for the scroll; zikaron, memory; talmud Torah, learning; klal Yisrael, our responsibility to the wider Jewish people; kehillah, community; and achrayut, stewardship. As Mordecai Kaplan taught, the past has a vote, not a veto.



Please make your way through the slide presentation on our website https://www.ahavathsholom.com that we will use when we meet in December. I hope it will be food for thought and will lead to many conversations.

Online Congregational Meeting on November 16th

On November 16, 2026 at 5:00 PM there will be a virtual meeting of the congregation on Zoom. At that time, we will hold a congregational vote. All members in good standing will be invited to the meeting. Those with a household membership may have two members attend and vote, those with a single membership may have one member attend and vote. The only agenda item at this meeting is a vote. If you are eligible to vote, on Wednesday, November 4, you will receive an email with material to review in advance. If you have any questions please contact Rabbi Rudin.



Save-the-date: Chanukah Party for Members

A CAS Chanukah party for members will be held on December 5th; the location to be announced. There will be a study session at 11:00 AM followed by a holiday lunch, a holiday game, and an auction. Further information will be available soon.



Notes from the October Board Meeting

- The financial situation of the congregation is in better shape than it was a year ago at this time. Although there were more donations last year (in particular the grants for the Joey Weisenberg concert), there was a significant reduction in High Holy Day expenses this year. The number of CAS members has held reasonably steady, with both a small number of departures and arrivals.
- As in the past, there will be an end-or-the-year appeal for donations. A letter will go out to the congregation in the coming weeks.
- The North Street building has been fully winterized. The heat has been turned off and the water drained (note that the bathrooms are now unusable).
- Proposals for possible renovation of the building from two contractors have been submitted. Both came within the approximate range of earlier estimates.
- There will be a Special Meeting of the Board the first week of November at which time Board members will make their recommendations on whether to renovate or sell the building. After this, packets of information detailing the options (including costs) will be sent to all members of the congregation in good standing in advance of a vote.
- Regardless of whether the building is sold or renovated, the congregation will likely remain at UUMSB through 2027. As our current lease runs through the end of this year, it will soon need to be renewed.
- A revision of the synagogue's bylaws, mainly to bring them into line with the Reconstructing Judaism movement and update the language, was approved by the Board.
- Susan Weinstein is beginning work on a major fundraiser for next May, tentatively planned as a dinner theater presentation by the Berkshire Public Theater.
- Service dates for the remainder of the year are on the calendar. The Rabbi has drafted tentative dates for the first half of 2027, including a possible second night Passover Seder.

November 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**
Clyde H. Beigh	Cheshvan 22 5781	11/9/2020
Zenas Block	Cheshvan 23 5769	11/21/2008
James Orenstein	Cheshvan 26 5779	11/4/2018
Thomas Josephs	Cheshvan 26 5769	11/24/2008
Louise Kusel Park Fitzgerald	Cheshvan 27 5773	11/11/2012
Arthur Rothstein	Cheshvan 27 5746	11/11/1985
Anshel Tessler	Cheshvan 28 5721	11/18/1960
Frank Rawitz	Kislev 6 5743	11/22/1982
Mildred Hillman	Kislev 7 5753	12/2/1992
Miriam Brecher	Kislev 7 5759	11/26/1998
Faye Paikin	Kislev 7 5742	12/3/1981
Martha Gellert	Kislev 12 5752	11/19/1991
Harry Fine	Kislev 12 5748	12/3/1987
Sally Fine	Kislev 12 5756	12/7/1992
Allan Brown	Kislev 16 5739	12/16/1978
Barbara Joslyn	Kislev 18 5754	12/2/1993
Rosa Richard	Kislev 18 5774	11/21/2013
Eugene Winters	Kislev 19 5762	12/4/2001

Donations

In memory of Joan Sussman and Rosalie Sussman
Gloria Dove

In honor of my sister-in-law, Alison Weinberg, for her tireless dedication
Karen Peltz

In memory of Mildred Hillman
Arthur and Louise Hillman

For the High Holy Days
Ann Dorfman

Yizkor
Linda Josephs
Irwin and Caroline Kessman

Book cart donation
Elaine Friedman

General donations
Michael Fisch
Michele and Steven Marantz
Marie Rudden
Deborah Slater

In support of the Creative Arts Workshops
Ross Bettinger
Lauren Behrman
Bruce Frishkoff
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Barbara Janoff
Carol Killian
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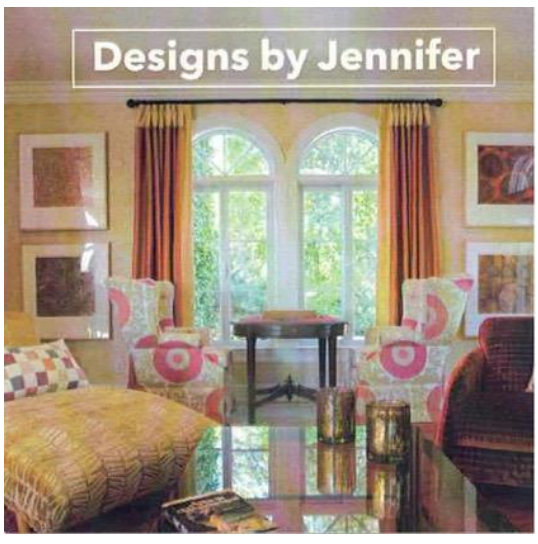
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