

SHORESH

שורש

Congregation Etz Chayim
Community News

OCTOBER 2019

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Medium for Communication

Listening sessions foster two-way communication between Etz Chayim and members



The *Shma Koleinu* listening sessions project was launched by Congregation Etz Chayim earlier this year as an intimate way for members to connect with Rabbi Kliel outside the *shul* and, if desired, share their ideas and needs related to the institution connected to their religious experience. Each listening session is hosted by a member family who also helps find 10 to 12 other members interested in participating in the discussion. Five sessions have already happened (last spring), and more are planned for the fall.

"It's a little presumptuous to think that just because people sit in front of me, they're going to be ready to pour out their hearts," Rabbi Kliel acknowledges. But he hopes participants come away from the experience with the message that "this is a rabbi who's accessible, and that they're attending this because it's going to make a difference in their lives."

An additional (and perhaps unexpected) benefit to the listening sessions: they've become another medium for communication in the other direction—for the *shul* to share points of interest with its membership. To illustrate, Rabbi Kliel points out how at recent sessions, it emerged that some Etz Chayim members remained unaware that Etz Chayim clergy could officiate at same-sex weddings.

"People didn't know about this, didn't know their kids were able and their rabbi

was willing to do it, he says. That's important to know!"

Rabbi Kliel also noticed a common theme emerge at recent discussions, related to young Jewish adults.

"A number of the people I met with have adult children, and they want to know that their synagogue is dedicating time and effort to cultivating relationships with people in that demographic, especially their own children. This is something of real concern that I heard," he says. (To learn more about one of the ways Etz Chayim is addressing this concern, please see the article "Meeting Younger Adults Where They Are," found on page 11.)

The *Shma Koleinu* initiative was born out of Rabbi Kliel's involvement with the Clergy Leadership Incubator, a program designed to encourage and inspire rabbis in organizational leadership, change management, and institutional transformation. Although his two-year participation in the project came to an end in June, there is consensus among those involved, at Etz Chayim, that the listening sessions should continue.

"We have to hear what's on the minds and in the hearts of the people who make up our membership base, says Rabbi Kliel.

Please contact the Etz Chayim office if you are interested in participating in a listening session this fall. ■

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Reading Upside Down, Cross-Stitch, and Other Hobbies



"I enjoyed the cross-stitch so much that I just kept doing it. I've done at least a dozen *Saturday Evening Post* covers. I have them all, but if somebody sees one and they want it, I give it away."

Bernie Sucharov says he's been faking it his entire life. "Everybody seems to think I'm something that I'm not really, but who knows, maybe I am," he laughs. He's referring to the ability to read upside-down, which he can't actually do—but people seem to think he can. As a *Gabai* at Hebrew Congregation of Winnipeg Beach (located on the grounds of Camp Massad since 1998, but born half a century earlier, in 1950), Bernie removes the Torah from the ark for the *Shabbat* reading and follows along from the other side of the *bimah*, to mark the spot where the reader leaves off, for subsequent readers.

"Everybody seems to think I read it upside down, but I don't, I follow and I make out the odd word, and I can find the end," he explains, adding that he does the same at Etz Chayim for Monday and Thursday Torah readings.

Bernie began attending Winnipeg Beach *shul* services when an old friend, Laurie Mainster, convinced him to come along one Saturday. "I enjoyed it and I kept going," he says. "I went with him until he died and now, I go with another friend, every Saturday. We have a good time out there.

"We have a *kiddush* like you wouldn't believe," he adds.

But Bernie's claim to fame at Hebrew Congregation of Winnipeg Beach isn't reading upside-down; it is the photos he takes of the beach *shul* every Saturday.

"They have 10 services a year in the summer, and previous to 2010 there was no record really of that synagogue. So, I started taking photographs during the service.

"I'm doing this for historical purposes. I make an album, and one copy goes to the Jewish Historical society, and another stays at the synagogue." He says he also photographs anniversaries and birthdays and other special *simchas* that happen at the beach synagogue.

"It's a wonderful place." The *shul* is small—the average 30 to 35 people at a Saturday morning service nearly fills the sanctuary, he says. But they have also accommodated up to 80 people inside on special occasions, says Bernie, who prepares and sends out tribute/greeting cards for the Winnipeg Beach synagogue as well.

When the beach *shul* closes its doors for the season, you'll find Bernie at Congregation Etz Chayim for daily services (every day except Wednesday, when services move south to the Simkin Centre). He started attending Etz Chayim services regularly in 1993 when his father passed away and kept up with the practice.

"Not that I'm overly religious," he says, "it's just something to do. I go to socialize, and to help make a minyan, and just to be there. I rather enjoy going." Outside of services, Bernie finds other reasons to go to *shul*: he helped with initial seeding and planting of Etz Chayim's Gan Chayim (see article on page 10); and although he's not a golfer, he has photographed the annual Etz Chayim golf tournament for several years.

Bernie's work as photographer for the beach *shul* and the golf tournament stems from similar work he did in his career: Until his retirement in 2011, Bernie was a civilian member and peace officer with the RCMP forensic identification services, attending crime scenes to photograph them.



“I wasn’t a Mountie, and I didn’t go through all the RCMP training; I was a civilian and I was a photographer,” he says. Although photographing murder scenes wasn’t part of his job (the regular RCMP members did that), he did once build a model of a Virden murder for court; the model is now in Regina’s RCMP museum.

“I was quite impressed when the judge ordered a full-time guard to watch over it during the trial,” he says. “They both liked it, the defense and the crown, it was kind of neat.”

After graduating from high school, Bernie worked as a draughtsman and photographer for the city of Winnipeg.

“I photographed interesting things that happened in the city he says.” He also worked for a few different architects in this same capacity: “I flew around the province to photograph things that the architects had built—I went to Thunder Bay and Thompson and to Virden, to build that model of the murder scene.”

When he’s not at *shul* or taking photos, Bernie’s hobby is cross-stitch, a type of embroidery in which X-shaped stitches are used to make a picture. “I can’t tell you how many I’ve done,” he says, but “I have six of them hanging in my living room.” A work colleague first introduced him to petit point, he says, and he switched to cross-stitch later.

“I enjoyed the cross-stitch so much that I just kept doing it. I’ve done at least a dozen *Saturday Evening Post* covers. I have them all, but if somebody sees one and they want it, I give it away.”

Bernie has two children and two grandchildren and one living sister. His daughter, Angela, is a pharmacist out of Stonewall Hospital, and his son, Stevan, “is a super handyman in Austin, Texas, and there’s nothing he can’t do.” His granddaughter, Angela’s daughter, works with elderly people with special needs, and his grandson, Angela’s son, works for Manitoba Hydro.

Bernie was born and raised in the North End and has lived in this part of Winnipeg his whole life. He received his Jewish education at Talmud Torah night school and went to public school (Machray and St. John’s) during the day. He learned to draught at Manitoba Technical Institute, now Red River College.

Now that he is retired and at the beginning of his ninth decade, Bernie is a bit surprised to be at this stage of life.

“81 is not that old now that I’m there,” he says. But he disagrees with the “81 is the new 61” saying.

“I’d go to 40, that’s the way I feel,” he laughs. So maybe he’ll be faking his age, soon, as well. ■



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God's Invitation

Finding the Spark of Divinity Within Ourselves

by Rabbi Klief Rose



Photo: Max Pixel

“God knocks on the door and pleads with us to recognize that we are each created *b'Tzelem Elohim*, in the image of the Divine.”

Every year, right around this time, with the High Holidays now well within our reach, I am reminded of my need to begin the introspective and soulful inner work of *Teshuvah*, a form of alignment, recognizing how I can be my best self.

It is also at this time that I am reminded of a rather humorous but inspiring (and true) story that happened to me one Shabbat afternoon while I was serving another congregation several years ago. On that Shabbat,

immediately after services, I happened to be walking down a hallway of the *shul* when I came across two members, a young man named James and his three-year-old son, Jacob. Together, they were carefully studying all the religious school graduation pictures (spanning a period of close to 50 years) adorning this particular hallway.

The two were looking intently at a picture of the most recent graduating class from the synagogue's religious school. All the graduates looked proud and perfect. In addition to the photos of the graduates, there were also the three pictures of the staff members who worked directly with this class. My picture was located on the left side of this photo.

Jacob's dad told me they had just had a conversation about my picture. Apparently, when James had pointed at my photo, he'd asked Jacob, “Who is that?” Jacob replied, pointing at my face, without any hesitation and with a great deal of certainty, “That's God!”

Jacob knew me quite well, came almost every Shabbat, and was part of the Shabbat kids' crew (very noticeable, loud, a beautiful collection of great children). On any given Shabbat, it was not at all unusual for Jacob to come over to me and check in. Sometimes he would simply call out to me, “Hey, Rabbi” or “Rabbi, where is ...?” I used to love my interactions with him, short, and right to the point.

To be clear, I do not have a God-complex at all. When I initially heard the story from Jacob's dad, I was ready to just dismiss this as a cute

tale about a sweet little boy. However, the story has stayed with me for quite some time. Every time I recall this encounter with little Jacob, I end up asking myself the very same questions, What did he mean, and did he really think that his rabbi is God?

For some odd reason I have been unable to let this out of my system. After a great deal of reflection on this I realized that little Jacob had served in no small way as my rebbe in that moment—as a teacher of infinite wisdom, reminding me of something sacred and pure about me, and about all of us.

Jacob's experience with my photo made me understand something about myself, who I am, what I am blessed to have, and greater clarity about the soul-work in which all of us are currently engaged during the weeks leading up to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, having to do with *Teshuvah*—mending our errors or returning to being wholesome.

A common human flaw that many of us deal with is that we do not always recognize who we are and what we have within us. I think that is part of the challenging work behind *Teshuvah*. At this time of the year, God has offered an invitation: we are invited to come back to understanding that we are all endowed with a spark of divinity or a Godliness that resides within ourselves.

If I view myself only as a corporeal being, then I have missed the mark (another way of understanding the word “*chet*” or sin). God knocks on the door and pleads with us to recognize that we are each created *b'Tzelem Elohim*, in the image of the Divine. When we truly accept this reality, when we really suspend our disbelief, this awareness of who we are makes it much harder to commit a wrongdoing to ourselves and hurt others (also blessed with Godliness).

The experience of *Teshuvah* has to be more than just repairing one's behaviour; it is also about deepening one's relationship with the Divine. In these days leading up to the High Holidays, may we each be able to find ourselves on a path of *Teshuvah*—turning and returning, coming back to a place of being reborn with a fresh and acute awareness of the Godliness that dwells within.

L'Shanah Tovah, dear friends, *shalom u'vracha!* May this be a sweet, healthy, meaningful, and spiritually uplifting year for you all! ■

Kol Nidre Acknowledges Our Humanity

This Yom Kippur recitation prompts us to be mindful about what we say to others.

Kol Nidre ushers in the holiest day of the year on the eve of Yom Kippur with its poignant and haunting melody, connecting us with Yom Kippurim past and generations of Jews who chanted it before us. Written in Aramaic, *Kol Nidre* is not actually a prayer and does not mention God; it is, in fact, more of a legal contract, a prescription for (in its earliest form) the annulment of vows made the year before. In the early 12th century, a change to the wording of *Kol Nidre* was made by Rabbi Meir ben Samuel (son-in-law of medieval Torah commentator and Rabbi, Rashi): “from the last Day of Atonement until this one became “from this Day of Atonement until the next, altering the meaning from what could be understood as more of a retroactive withdrawal of unfulfilled promises from the preceding year to a more predictive one—a nullification of oaths we will neglect to fulfil in the year to come.

The concept of vow annulment—an annual “do-over” authorized by religious tradition and under the eyes of God—has sometimes been controversial among rabbinic circles, and some rabbis have historically discouraged the recitation of *Kol Nidre* (which means “all vows” in English).

But Congregation Etz Chayim Rabbi Kliel Rose says we do not always have to take prayers and other religious recitations for their exact, literal translations.

“There are times when the literal does speak to me, but often I don’t take the words of prayer literally,” he says. “It’s really a way to open up a door that allows for a deeper prayerful experience.”

Prayer is aspirational, Rabbi Kliel says, and the intrinsic value in saying the words of *Kol Nidre* is to highlight that we need to be mindful of the words we utter and the commitments that we make, he continues.



“Often I don’t take the words of prayer literally. It’s really a way to open up a door that allows for a deeper prayerful experience.”

Photo: Antranias
(pixabay.com)

“This is a time when we sort of suspend our disbelief and we take seriously, in that heightened moment, that we’re going to be accountable for the words that we utter, and we’re going to be careful not to commit to things that we can’t follow through with. We want to align ourselves with a path that is the most ethical and most true to who we are as people.”

Thus, we make these aspirational statements so we can achieve at the highest level, continues Rabbi Kliel, “and yet, we’re also cognizant of the fact that we’re going to fail, that’s part of being a human being,” he says.

“There’s something profoundly inspiring about the fact that you can make these commitments in a way that God is able to recognize your human fallibility. It’s something that makes it really palatable for people.” ■

Funeral and Cemetery Services

Congregation Etz Chayim provides funeral services at the synagogue, graveside, or at Chesed Shel Emes community funeral chapel. Etz Chayim also operates three cemeteries: Bnay Abraham, Hebrew Sick Benefit, and Rosh Pina Memorial Park.

For help or information, please contact Etz Chayim Funeral Director Shelley Sklover at (204) 589-6305 ext. 214 or ssklover@etzchayim.ca.

Shanah Tovah Greetings

Elissa Abrams and Alex Singer, Claudia, Ben, and Hannah

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Diane and Richard Boroditsky and family

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Dina Frankel, Gail, Ron, and Marlee Cantor

Wishing a happy and healthy New Year to all our family and friends.

Wendy, Alan, Laurie, and Jillian Daien

Wishing our family and friends a happy and healthy New Year.

Darlene and Jerry Davis

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Ann, Max, and Elie Feierstein

Wishing your families a year of *gezunt*, health, and wellbeing.

Norman Freedman and family

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Dina and Bruce Granove

May good health, good times, and good memories accompany you throughout the coming year.

Lil and Ben Hirt

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Margaret Kasner and family

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Terry and Jerry Katz Q.C.

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Howard Kideckel

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Matthew, Nola, Ezra, Yona, Galya, and Gilon Lazar

Shana Tova U'Metukah.

Estrid Mandel and family

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Evelyn Numerow and family

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Fay Reich

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.



Cal Reich

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Jane, Ronald, and Tiffany Reider

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Lorraine Reiner

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Colette Rubin

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Kim Hirt, Jerry Rubin, Rachel, and Bina

A sweet and happy New Year to all our family and friends.

Sid and Joyce Rosenhek and family

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Marvin and Esther Samphir and family

Wishing family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Shayna and Merrill Shulman and family

Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Mimi and Earl Singer and family

Wishing family, friends, and congregation a healthy and happy New Year.

Avery and Nata Spigelman and their children Adam, David, Jenny, Deborah and grandchildren Joshua and Connor

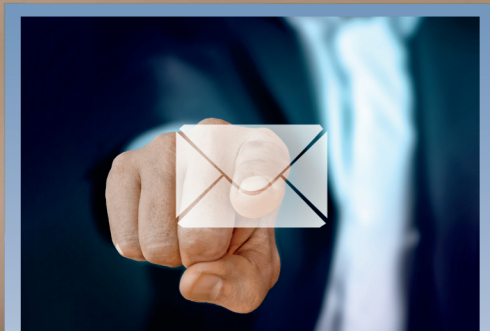
Wishing our family and friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Tony Sorto

Wishing my friends a healthy and happy New Year.

Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year.



Shana Tova U'Metukah

Make a New Year's Resolution to connect with Shoresh magazine and share what you like about Shoresh, what you'd like to see more of, and what you could live without. Please send your email to the editor:

Lesliemalkin@LofC.ca

Top photo: Ron Almog
Inset photo: Max Pixel

Break the Fast With Bogie's Best

Uncle Sid may be expecting the traditional egg salad and your cheese *blintzes*. But if you're hosting the break-the-fast this year, you get to decide—perhaps it's time for something a bit different. Consider one of two egg dishes suggested by Etz Chayim chef Bogie (Boguslaw) Stras. The soufflé freezes well and can be reheated for serving on Yom Kippur. For Bogie's own frittata, combine ingredients ahead of time, pour into a buttered baking dish, and refrigerate. Bake upon return from *shul* (serve Uncle Sid a glass of wine and some soup and a salad while the frittata bakes. When he gets to the main act, he'll have forgotten what he was waiting for).

Signature Cheese Blintz Soufflé*

Batter

½ c butter, room temperature
¼ c sugar
⅓ tsp salt
6 large eggs
1-½ c sour cream
½ c orange juice
1 c flour
2 tsp baking powder
Beat all ingredients at medium speed with electric mixer until smooth.

Filling

8 oz cream cheese, cubed
2 c cottage cheese
2 large egg yolks
1 tsp vanilla extract
1 Tbsp sugar
Mix all ingredients together in another bowl, separate from batter.

Assembly

1. Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease a 9 x 13-inch baking pan.
2. Pour half the batter into pan and pour filling over batter, spreading evenly. Top with remaining batter.
3. Bake uncovered 50 to 60 minutes or until puffed and golden brown.
4. Serve with sour cream or fruit sauce.

Yield 10 servings. Freezes well.

*Recipe from *Divine Kosher Cuisine*, by Risé Routenberg and Barbara Wasser (Congregation Agudat Achim, 2006).

Bogie's Garden Vegetable Frittata (from Bogie's Own Recipe Book)

Ingredients

16 oz pkg frozen vegetables - cooked
10 eggs - beaten
½ c milk
1 Tbsp chopped fresh basil
1 c shredded mozzarella cheese
½ c shredded provolone cheese
¼ c grated parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. In a large bowl, thoroughly combine all ingredients.
3. Pour into a buttered baking dish.
4. Bake for 50 minutes or until mixture is set.
5. Serve with heated tomato sauce.



Growing Gan Chayim

Congregation Etz Chayim is fertile ground for Jewish prayer and ritual, spiritual contemplation, community connection... and, it turns out, veggies, too. The first time a community garden has been planted at Etz Chayim, Gan Chayim is found behind the *shul* (north section), facing the parking lot, and consists of six large planters.

A committee of five Etz Chayim members began planning for the garden in January; in March, seedlings were started, indoors. At the end of May, a number of Etz Chayim members came to help with the outdoor planting: “young adults, kids, seniors—it was really an intergenerational activity,” says Claudia Griner, program director at Etz Chayim.

By mid-July, the six planters were flourishing with produce—one filled with Havdallah herbs, the others with tomatoes, cucumbers, flowers, dill. Each planter has a Talmudic saying or a verse or a little story affixed to it.



Kosher Catering Service

Congregation Etz Chayim Catering offers a variety of Kosher Shabbat, *Kiddush*, dinner, and party menus. We also cater home events, office meetings, shiva meals, and more. Let us know how we can help you: (204) 589-6305.

“Everything is growing, and people are helping to keep it clean,” says Claudia.

The plan for harvested veggies and herbs is to use them internally, at *Kiddushim* following services or for other synagogue events, such as a *Kabbalat Shabbat*.

The *shul* received a generous donation towards Gan Chayim from the Gall family, in honour of Keaton Gall’s bar mitzvah, celebrated in the fall of 2018. ■

They planned
they seeded
they planted
they weeded
they harvested
they garnished the
dishes...

Top: Linda Waldman.

Bottom (L-R): FAYANNE CHARACH, TAYLOR LLOY.



Meeting Younger Adults Where They Are



Photo: Marco Verch



Photo: Amber Taber

Etz Chayim’s Torah on Tap program may not be your typical and traditional Torah-learning program, says Rabbi Kliel. But that’s kind-of the point.

“The idea behind it is to go into an environment that’s not necessarily conventional as far as how people associate Torah learning, because we’re trying to reach people where they are. And to do that with a sense of comfort and ease so that learning Torah doesn’t become an obstacle.”

Designed as a bit of a bridge to younger Jewish adults, the idea is not a new one, nor is it his own, Rabbi Kliel is quick to point out—it’s one he says he heard about nearly a decade and a half ago through colleagues. But it’s an idea that resonated, because it simply made sense to him. “Coming into the synagogue building is not always as attractive as showing up in another environment that’s more typical for them,” he says. So, studying Torah and related topics... at the bar.

Rabbi Kliel comes to Torah on Tap evenings prepared with Judaic text that is connected to discussion topics which are stimulating and of relevance to younger Jewish adults’ lives, such as sexuality and premarital sex within Judaism, or Jewish ideas about economic equality.

“We’ve had two really successful events,” he says, adding that some of the attending younger adults were associated with Etz Chayim

through their families, while others heard about it through social media and simply showed up at the Brazen Hall Kitchen & Brewery venue in Fort Rouge. While it happens outside the *shul* walls, Etz Chayim may well have tapped into a concept that keeps a younger generation connected to it. ■

“Coming into the synagogue building is not always as attractive as showing up in another environment that’s more typical for them.”

Keeping Family Connections Strong

Simkin Kin Reunite

It was a weekend of *naches* for the Simkin family during the last weekend of July, some of which happened inside Congregation Etz Chayim walls. About 130 members of the family gathered in Winnipeg for a Simkin-family reunion, including spouses, children, grandchildren, and even some second-cousins.

Shmuel and Fanny Simkin immigrated to Canada in 1908, and their children produced 18 Simkin grandchildren. All 18 first cousins grew up in Winnipeg and remain relatively close, but only seven of them still live in Winnipeg today, the majority having moved to various other parts of the world. And while all 18 cousins have gotten together before, it was time for a larger reunion.

Reaching Out

The Simkin clan decided that in addition to just the 18 cousins getting together, they wanted to invite their children and grandchildren, and also reach out to whatever second cousins they could find, “some of whom we knew and some of whom we didn’t know,” said Jerry Cohen, the second-eldest Simkin cousin and chair of the reunion planning committee (consisting of some of the Winnipeg cousins and their spouses).

“I’m looking forward to seeing all my cousins, including some of the second cousins whom I’ve seen on a family tree but I’ve never met,” continued Jerry, before the reunion. “Some of our second cousins have never met any of

us, but they like the idea of a Simkin cousins reunion.”

On the Thursday evening before the reunion officially began, just the 18 cousins and their spouses met for a barbecue to “schmooze and eat” in the party room where Jerry and his wife Susan live.

“That was wonderful,” said Simon Simkin, second youngest of the 18 cousins, after the event.

“We all got together and those of us who hadn’t spent any time with each other over the past year got to catch up a bit,” he added.

The ‘official’ reunion kicked off on Friday July 26 with a Shabbat dinner at the Saul and Claribel Simkin Centre. Saturday began at Congregation Etz Chayim for Shabbat services, which some of the cousins helped to lead (Jonathan Massel chanted the Haftorah, Sam Simkin davened *Musaf*, and Jerry Cohen gave the *D’var Torah*), while many other cousins had *aliyot* and other honours. Attending relatives had opportunities to visit with family members they hadn’t had enough time with the night before, or with Etz Chayim members who were ‘old friends,’ and whom they hadn’t seen in a while.

Freilach Festivities

Saturday night was a gala event at the Inn at the Forks, with tasty food, *freilach* music, an amusing family quiz game, and karaoke. Sunday morning of the reunion was brunch at the Asper Jewish Community campus with a



L-R: Jerry Cohen, Em Cohen (of Winnipeg, sister to Jerry Cohen), Barb Hyman (of Winnipeg, sister to Jerry Cohen), Saralyn Greenblatt (from Neve Ilan, Israel, sister to Jerry Cohen). Photo: Michael Roberts

baseball game to follow, and Sunday night was dinner at Kum Koon Garden, “what we remember doing growing up as kids with our parents,” says Jerry. “Sunday evening Chinese was a Jewish thing, back then.”

For entertainment and reminiscing, Simkin family members prepared a film loop of about 200 photos to run throughout the evening on Saturday



Friday evening dinner at the Saul and Claribel Simkin Centre. Photo: Michael Roberts



Display board of Simkin family photos and articles tracing family history. Photo: Michael Roberts



Back Row: (L-R) Robby Hyman, Barbara Hyman,* Sam Simkin,* Carol Simkin, Sherricki Erlichman, Judi Simkin,* Em Cohen,* Jackie Simkin,* Joel Dudeck, Carey Simkin, Bernie Simkin,* Cynthia Hiebert-Simkin. Middle Row: (L-R) Ruth Simkin,* Martin Erlichman,* Jerry Cohen,* Susan Cohen, Eby Wold,* Sharron Dudeck,* Diane Simkin Demeter,* Steven Demeter. Floor Sitters: (L-R) Nanci Simkin, Jack Simkin,* Jim Greenblatt, Saralyn Greenblatt,* Murray Simkin,* Gary Simkin,* Simon Simkin* (names with asterisks are "first-cousin" Simkins). Photo: Steven Demeter

night, as well as a large spreadsheet-family tree to exhibit at some of the events and a display board of family photos and articles tracing a bit of the family history.

Kin Came from Away

Lauren Massel lives in Vancouver and is daughter to Sharron and Joel Dudeck; Sharron is one of the 18 Simkin first cousins on the planning committee for the reunion. Lauren came to the reunion with husband Jonathan and children Jacob, Joshua, and Zachary. And she says she wouldn't have missed it.

"I grew up with all my extended Simkin family. We spent our summers with cousins at Falcon Lake, winter breaks together in Palm Springs, and celebrated the holidays together," says Lauren. "They are some of my best childhood memories."

Simon is one of the seven remaining Simkin Winnipeggers. But distance hasn't seemed to affect a genuine closeness.

"I've stayed close with them my whole life," he said, adding, "we've never done this with all our kids and grandkids."

Lasting Family Ties

Growing up in a large family "gives us a strong sense of connection, because there's a strong sense of support," says Simon. "Family always came first, and that was one of the reasons that many of us wanted our kids and grandkids to attend—we wanted them to see that connection and that sense of support, how it could be there forever."

He adds that his own kids follow some of their generation of Simkins on Facebook, but they don't really know them and don't get to see them often.

"We thought this might be the last chance where we could get all 18 of us, and as many of our kids that could come and as many of our grandkids that could come, together to do this kind of mass family bonding."

After the reunion, Simon's enthusiasm was palpable, and he seemed

reluctant to narrow it down to one or two highlights or special moments. "It was awesome, he said, and "I think everybody that came had a great time. All of us being together was an ongoing highlight, the fact that we were able to do this.

"It was three days of special moments, he added." ■

ETZ CHAYIM PEOPLE

SPECIAL BIRTHDAYS

SEPTEMBER

Regan Katz, Shayna Shulman

OCTOBER

Ed Calnitsky, Kathy Cobor, Bruce Granove, Glory Pudavick, Ian Rayter, Dawn Rittberg, Carla Rubinfeld, Allan Shinfield, Alex Singer, Laurie Solomon

NOVEMBER

Lloyd Baker, Mark Cohen, Daniel Faingold, Jerry Katz, Larry Kraitberg, Jeffrey Marantz, Ron Rittberg, Sheryl Singer

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER

Wendy and Alan Daien (30); Debbie and Steven Mintz (45); Judy and Lawrence Shiffman (30); Tammy and Wayne Singer (15)

OCTOBER

Bonnie and Steven Buchalter (20); Cheryl and Murray Katz (25); Jan and Jerry Klein (40); Sharon Maltz and Howard Jesierski (25)

NOVEMBER

Carla and Kenneth Goldstein (50); Leslie Singer and Sheldon Glow (25)

Member News and Life-Cycle Events

IN MEMORIAM

Linda Margolese

Albert Rosenberg

Shelley Sasley

Pam Zentner

MAZEL TOVS

Alyssa Cohen for finishing first in Classical Guitar Solo 20th/21st-Century composers, grade level 7, at the Winnipeg Music Festival

Rhianna Cohen, runner up in the Vocal Solo, Folk Song, 18 years and under at the Winnipeg Music Festival

Leah Craven and Steven London on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Michael, on October 12

Ingrid Neumarkt and Alejandro Eilberg on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Max, on October 19

Ruth Riesenbach on the birth of a great-granddaughter, Slone Nova Raizman, in Toronto

Rabbi Kliel Rose and Dorit Kosmin on the Bat Mitzvah of their daughter Aziza, on Monday, August 26th

Roberta Searle on the birth of a great-grandson, Noah Lewis Hack

Ed Shinewald on the Bat Mitzvah of his granddaughter Orly Shinewald, on October 19

Debra and Norman Yusim on the birth of a grandson, Noah Lewis Hack

Improv at Shul

Arielle Block explores a fun life skill with Etz Chayim Junior Congregation students.

With our tightly scheduled and over-planned lives, improvising is a life skill from which we might all benefit. Last spring, some Etz Chayim youth in grades 4 and up got to explore some tricks of the trade for this theatre genre, through three special Junior Congregation improv mornings. The workshops were led by Congregation Etz Chayim member Arielle Block, a Winnipeg actress, singer, and dancer, and similar programming is planned for the fall.

In theatre, improvisation, or improv, is drama conjured in the moment. Improv actors commonly take audience suggestions for plot, character, setting, or dialogue direction, and sometimes they draw on other sources of inspiration too.

Daniel Bokser, who participated in the spring Junior Congregation improv workshops and calls Arielle an “amazing teacher,” describes how she first taught

her students some basic skills—how not to end a conversation, for example: “If someone says, ‘Hello,’ you have to say, ‘Hello, how are you’ back, you can’t just say ‘hello’ because then you can’t continue the conversation,” Daniel explains.

“Then, she would let us and our creativity carry the conversation away,” he says.

Daniel, 11, acknowledges that he and his peers were shy in the beginning: “At first, no one really wanted to participate.” But once things got rolling, he continues, “everyone started participating and it was almost like a competition of who could do it better, and we really tried to out-best our own records for how long we held the conversation, and stuff like that,” he says with enthusiasm. “It was a really fun program.”

Aaron Feuer, who is also 11 and participated in the workshops too, says that since any topic can be used for improv, a religious context doesn’t seem out of place.

“For Sukkot, you would make a Sukkot-related conversation,” he explains.

Improv can foster a bit of a confidence boost for people who practise it, Aaron



Daniel Bokser

Aaron Feuer

says, and “it helps a lot with thinking on the spot,” too.

Aaron says he even learned a thing or two from his improv pals.

“The first time I did it (workshopped an improv character), I made it a really boring, basic person. Then, this other kid made a secret agent guy, and I’m like, ‘Okay, I need to be more creative with this!’”

He so thoroughly enjoyed the improv workshops that he found himself “excitedly waiting for the next one.”

“It was something to look forward to,” Aaron says. “It’s fun to make up different characters,” he adds.

And a good reason to check out Junior Congregation this fall. Stay tuned for future improv morning dates. ■

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Women's League Offers Members Unique Programming and Social Opportunities

Friendship is the first thing Brenda Keller points to as a benefit of joining the Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim.

"It's a great camaraderie. Everybody has a good time when we get together, there's a lot of socializing."

Innovative programming is another benefit that falls closely behind the first one, in Brenda's books. She describes the Bridal Show Through the Years, a unique membership opening program that delighted both current and potential women's league members (as well as the general public) mid-September. The fashion show took audience members down matrimonial memory lane through different eras of bridal fashion and wedding trends.

Brenda says a big part of Women's League is fundraising to support programs of the Jewish Theological Seminary and other centres of Rabbinic training.

"Rabbi Kliel has been a recipient of what Women's League does," she adds.

Fundraising activities have expanded now, though, Brenda says: "We're also fundraising for within the city and for the synagogue itself." Women's League supports House of Peace, a transitional housing initiative in Winnipeg for



L-R: Jane Reider, Margie Miller (International President, Women's League for Conservative Judaism), Joyce Rosenhek, Randy Schwartz, Debbie Baker, Brenda Keller, Estrid Mandel, Gail Cantor (Women's League of Congregation Etz Chayim Torah Fund brunch, 2018).

women who are newcomers to Canada (Etz Chayim's Judaica Gift Shoppe, operated by the Women's League, helps support House of Peace), and the Winnipeg Harvest food bank (through volunteering). The Women's League continues to fund juice and challah for *Kiddush* on Shabbat, refreshments for Junior Congregation, and gifts for B'nai Mitzvot. The Women's League also sponsored the golf tournament, this year, and was involved in Etz Chayim's Purim carnival.

The full roster of Women's League programming for the coming year was still in the works at time of writing, with several exciting ideas under consideration to stimulate new members—good reasons to give Women's League a try.

"We're very excited," Brenda says. ■

"It's a great camaraderie. Everybody has a good time when we get together."

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