



Beth El Synagogue Annual Report

2020-2021

Beth El Synagogue is a pluralistic and diverse congregation welcoming all who wish to enjoy an enriching experience through spiritual growth, observance, and mitzvot. We seek to create a Kehilla, a Jewish village, molding responsible citizens of our local communities and the larger world.



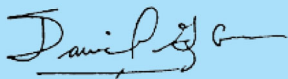
www.betheldurham.org

Chevrei,

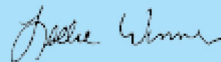
Why are we here, what is our purpose? Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai used to say: "If you have learned much Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, because for such a purpose were you created" (Pirkei Avot 2:8). We were created to learn. A year of pandemic is not one we would have chosen, but we learned a lot.

We learned that people in our community who are sick, disabled, or lack transportation can attend virtual services when coming in person is impossible. We learned a shiva over Zoom allows family and friends from all over the world to participate in the mitzvah of *nihum aveilim* - comforting mourners. We learned to "host" scholars and teachers and authors from all over the world to enrich our learning and expand our spiritual horizons. We took Judaism out of the synagogue, first into our homes, and then into public spaces like parks and parking lots for celebrations like shofar blowing and lighting Hanukkah candles. We learned the importance of calling one another regularly and bringing gifts of challah, babka, and hamentaschen just to say "You are not forgotten." And we learned how lucky we are and how our fortune obligates us to help those in need. We will carry these lessons into the future so that when we (soon!) meet again at 1004 Watts Street, we will return as a more accessible, welcoming, and connected community than ever before.

Perhaps most of all, we learned (or remembered) how Beth El is not a building or an organization; our success is not measured in facts and figures, but in moments of connection and community and love. It was not a year of our choosing, but it was a year of learning, and it was for this purpose that we are here.



Rabbi Daniel Greyber



Leslie Winner, Beth El President

OVER THE LAST YEAR...



92% of congregants attended one or more live services on Zoom

51% of congregants attended one or more live classes on Zoom



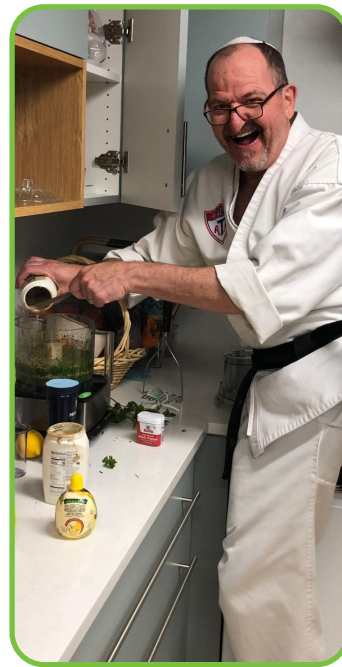
100% of congregants had at least one interaction with Beth El over the High Holidays

During the self-isolation of this pandemic, I have craved connection with a spiritual community more than ever. Beth El has met the need -- with its diverse worship styles, its technical savvy, and especially its big ol' open collective heart. - Barry Yeoman

CREATING AND SUSTAINING COMMUNITY



We loved attending the River Church service and the discussion with Rabbi Greyber, Bishop Godbee, and Apostle Hinds; both were informative, moving, inspirational, and helpful in these very difficult times. Kol HaKavod!
- Peter and Marilyn Ornstein



Beth El and the Orthodox Kehillah will soon celebrate 40 years together in the same building, which we believe makes this the longest standing relationship between an Orthodox shul and a Conservative synagogue in the country.
- Benjamin Abram

BRIDGING DIFFERENCES

MAINTAINING TRADITION

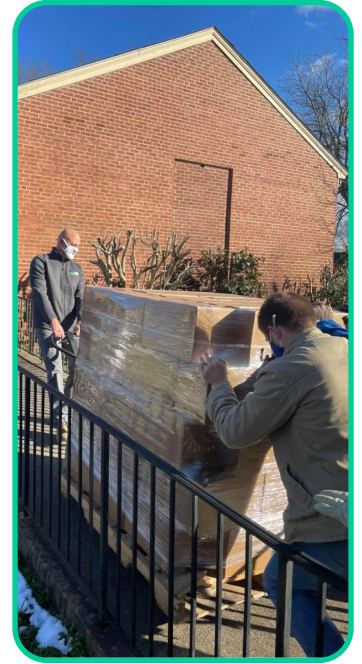
HELPING

The Community of Caring brings meals to bereaved families, visits with folks who are ill or alone, and drops off adorable Beth El onesies to new parents -- simple reminders that our congregation cares deeply for one another.
- Karen Burns



SERVING

When the Latter Day Saints offered a truckload of non-perishable food to the Walltown Food Bank, Beth El offered storage in the unoccupied Freedman Center, now a distribution site for 140 families during the pandemic. A second truckload of food recently arrived from the Mormons.
- Robert Wechsler



Thank you for our wonderful Shabbat gift bag. It gave us the feeling of that connectedness with Beth El that we haven't been able to have in person. It was very thoughtful to have it delivered -- especially since we are in the outermost limits of Beth El's reach.
- Maxine and Alan Stern

CONNECTING IN A TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCE

In times of peace and prosperity, and in times of difficulty and loss, we rely on our caring community at Beth El. Despite being physically separated since COVID-19 limitations began early in 2020, our congregation has risen to the challenge of finding ways to comfort and support one another, to stay connected and engaged, and thrive through some of the toughest times in recent memory.

Drawing upon our shared Jewish values, we have pulled together, acted creatively, and learned a few new virtual tools to continue as a vibrant Jewish community, welcoming to all.

- Virtual children's, youth, and adult learning opportunities
- Virtual Shabbat, High Holidays, and minyanim
- Engagement activities: Scavenger hunts, holiday meals-on-the-go, delivery of challah and candles
- Preparing members and families for conversion and b'nai mitzvah ceremonies
- Calls, supplies, and groceries for homebound congregants
- Pastoral care: Comforting those who are sick, going through personal crises, or mourning the loss of loved ones



Enrichment and Spiritual Growth

Beth El continues to welcome a diverse membership with expanding opportunities for spiritual exploration and learning. Religious services, spiritual, and educational offerings meet all members wherever they are on their journey and nourish us with unique experiences through which we learn from each other. Our congregation, worshipping and growing together, is the heart of the synagogue.

This morning was beautiful -- meaningful in so many ways. I must say that I was in tears for much of the service, just thinking about how lucky we are to be together when we are alone. - Margie Satinsky

What a joy to watch my son grow increasingly excited about his Jewish identity alongside his friends in Talmud Torah. The pride on his face as he learns to read Hebrew this year has been an absolute gift to my mama heart. I am so grateful to Alexandra and the Talmud Torah teachers for making this possible.

- Jessica Womack

It is great to welcome in the next generation with exciting and engaging USY and Kadima events that create connections to both Judaism and the Beth El community.

- Adam Kirsch, USY President

Virtual Events and Recorded Programs

- Jewish Authors Book Festival
- Monthly Lunch and Learn sessions with Rabbi Greyber
- Hebrew I and II with Donna Goldstein
- *Doors, Doorways & Transitions* bi-weekly learning with Rabbi Sager
- *Bethelians* podcast interviews with members
- Beth El YouTube channel

GENEROSITY OF TIME AND RESOURCES

Our budget reflects Beth El's beliefs, values, and priorities.

Dues are the foundational commitment sustaining our community. Annual Fund gifts and Life & Legacy endowments strengthen that foundation, helping us live fully into our mission of plurality, diversity, and enriching spiritual experience – welcoming all members regardless of their financial means. Contributions of volunteer time and annual gifts, great or small, ensure that we can all enjoy meaningful and unique programming whether we are gathering virtually or in-person.

1/3 of our annual budget, including staff and educational resources, depends on revenue beyond dues.

Tuition and fees cover less than 1/3 of the budget for Jewish Education for children and youth.

25% of our members receive dues abatement.

June 1, 2020 - May 31, 2021 Budget		
REVENUE	Budgeted	Projection thru May 31, 2021
Dues	\$655,000	\$623,920
Annual Fund and other donations	\$225,500	\$280,662
Distributions/interest from endowment and other funds	\$80,193	\$81,096
Other income (Memorial Book, High Holidays, facilities rental*, misc.)	\$91,701	\$47,154
Religious school and youth activity income	\$57,058	\$44,574
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,109,452	\$1,077,406
EXPENSES	Budgeted	Projection thru May 31, 2021
Member ritual life, pastoral care, programming, and engagement	\$582,638	\$560,508
Children's/youth education and engagement	\$165,450	\$132,500
Secure, maintained, and welcoming synagogue (includes building & grounds, general and administrative, fundraising, & misc. expenses)	\$361,364	\$329,327
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,109,452	\$1,022,245

*BE was unable to rent out facilities as we had hoped pre-COVID.

TZEDAKAH, THE MITZVAH OF GIVING

It has been our privilege to be members of Beth El for 47 years, during which the synagogue has increasingly become a vibrant, engaging community. It is the home which we can always count on for support in troubled times and where we share our simchas.

- Ari and Anita Lewin

We are members of Life and Legacy today so that our son and future generations can benefit from the same kinds of community resources that have been endowed for us.

- Valerie and Matthew Glassman



THRIVING TOGETHER

Yasher Koach! Clergy, staff, board members, and volunteers went above and beyond to stream Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services, to perform socially distanced tashlich and shofar blowing, to deliver 435 High Holiday kits, and distribute fantastically creative “Days of Awe-some” bags to help Talmud Torah students celebrate the holidays.



Members shared their favorite qualities about Beth El during small group Zoom sessions in Summer 2020.

Thank you for making Beth El a thriving synagogue, open to all, offering services and programs that help us all worship, learn, and celebrate life's milestones with one another.