

# CONGREGATION SHIR LIBEYNU ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## DECEMBER 7, 2014

Meeting chaired by Jamie Flagal, President, began at 11:22 a.m after a quorum was established.

### 1. Welcome by Rabbi Aviva Goldberg

- Ritual and Leadership were inordinately easy due to Daniela, Paula Wolfson and others leading cantorial functions including incorporating of new chants and melodies
- We have several people interested in having a Bat/Bar Mitzvah with our Congregation with five new kids enrolled in our new focused Bar/Bat Mitzvah classes run by Jonathan Silin and Marilyn Arkin and also organized by Harriet and Eden.
- High Holy Days went very well.
- Torah needs to be repaired. We have someone who has confirmed they are willing to donate \$15,000 for the repair. **Aviva will be speaking to Harvey Worth who originally looked into a possible Torah repair so that we can get the process of the repair going.**
- We have an opportunity for some money for siddurim for Shabbat. Our High Holy Days machzor is no longer in print. Aviva is still investigating the best machzor to replace the current one. We would probably need 150+, maybe even 200 copies. **Aviva will be putting together a letter to the person who wanted to donate funds for prayer books and may request some of the funds go towards High Holy Days prayer books.**
- Ordination was for the entire community. One of the most moving experiences Aviva has had. Guests that Aviva and Dinah had invited were very impressed with the warmth and success. Aviva was very specific about what she wanted for the ordination and Harriet Eisenkraft executed it perfectly.
- *Comments resulting from report:*
  - Shabbat Service:
    - Zev and Yona Frishman received great feedback from guest at the Shabbat service on December 6<sup>th</sup>.
    - Space issue in the chapel. We must comply with fire code. It was expressed that we need to provide space for elderly, handicapped and parents with kids. Accessibility within a crowded space is an issue.
    - We get great attendance relative to some other synagogues in Toronto.

Copies of prayers at High Holy Days:

- Some confusion regarding the order of the photocopies in the Rosh Hashanah copies. The order of the copies was intentional but **Aviva to look at a way to make it clear for next year. We must also look at copyright with respect to copying and making a more elaborate combined supplement and prayer packet.**
- **We used to sell Machzors. If we are purchasing new ones, we will have look at that possibility as well.**

## 2. Report by Daniela Gesundheit

- Especially moved by outpouring of excitement and generosity on occasion of Aviva's ordination. Momentous occasion and honoured to be a part of it. Mazel Tov to Aviva
- Thank you to countless volunteers, tireless board and presidents, past and present.
- Activities this year:
  - Spent a day teaching Tefillah to children aged 6-13 at the DJCS at MNJCC
  - Participated in Tehilla, conference organized by Aviva Chernick that brought together cantors, cantorial soloists and song leader from various communities and across several denominations.
  - Expanded musical repertoire for the High Holy Days, bringing in more of our musically oriented congregants, including several teens the bema. Also brought in some professional from outside Shir Libeynu.
  - Led the August musical service without a co-leader (first time). Brought in two Toronto-based poets to share their work and several new musical selections of music to share with Shir Libeynu congregants..
  - Organized music for Aviva's ordination ceremony and reception.
  - Made herself available to congregants during lifecycle celebrations and challenges.
- Coming Year goals:
  - Expand the musical repertoire of each of our services.
  - Looking forward to our teens becoming b'nei mitzvoh.
  - Make herself available and attentive to the needs of the ever-expanding Shir Libeynu family.
- *Comments resulting from report:*
  - *Ordination inspired Rev. Shawn to look into sound at First. Spoken word is really a problem at First.*
  - *Video feed into library lost sound several times during the High Holy Days. **Need to look into correcting this for next year.***

- Kids really like working with Daniela. **Rebecca has suggested a children's choir.**

### 3. Minutes of Last Year's AGM

- Corrections and comments regarding the minutes:
  - Starting time of meeting should read a.m. not p.m. **Natalie to make changes to the 2013 AGM minutes**
  - Harriet Eisenkraft commented that no posters are allowed in the MNJCC except on day of the program. We are allowed to put flyers up prior to the event.

Motion to approve minutes: Elizabeth Abraham

Seconded: Rabbi Aviva Goldberg.

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

- *Comments:*
  - Elizabeth Abraham commented how excited she was about the ordination and to be part of the community.

### 4. President's Report-James Flagal

- Thank you to our spiritual leaders Rabbi Goldberg and Chazzan Gesundheit
  - Especially appreciated Aviva's skill in giving us a unique lens into the Israel situation that reflects the values of Shir Libeynu but did not alienate the wide range of perspectives that exist amongst our congregants.
  - Daniela provides a new experience and understanding of Tefillah which provides an exciting and enriching experience with prayer.
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- Program Highlights and Relationships
  - World Pride: Both Aviva and Daniela helped lead the Interfaith event in June at the Metropolitan United Church. As Aviva held havdallah candle connecting the theme of separation as a reminder of LGBT communities still living in darkness facing state sponsored persecution and groups that bring them light as they face imminent harm. Everyone from many backgrounds experienced their first havdallah service and were absorbed in the moment. Our Congregation took on a leadership role within our community for World Pride that far exceeded our relatively small size of a shul – and yet we were still very successful at ensuring a broad participation from our community partners in World Pride events. We shouldn't hesitate to engage and collaborate with other community partners in larger community events and we should even reach out beyond our community to engage other organizations and faith-based groups to realize the values we hold so dear.
  - Children & Bar/Bat Mitzvah programming

- Our children's program education education, Rebecca Sheridan provided fun, engaging programs exploring a different theme each month through a combination of crafts, stories, songs and healthy snacks for children 3 to 8 at our Shabbat morning service.
  - High Holy Day program for children expanded this year. In addition to learning holy day related songs, making challah and challah covers we held our first ever morning service on Yom Kippur. We also had a special discussion about repentance led by board member j wallace.
  - Bar/Bat Mitzvah program – we now have a compulsory, multi session bar/bat mitzvah enrichment program. Developed by Jonathan Silin and taught by Marilyn Arkin with a special session with Rabbi Goldberg, five pre-bar/bat mitzvah kids are learning and talking together. The programs have/will include an introductory session with parents/grandparents, a tour of Kensington market, reflective assignments, a *Tikkun Olam* project, and celebrating Shabbat together.
  - Shabbat services were mostly Saturday morning services with several Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday nights. We marked several milestones for members.
  - Kiddushes were a little lighter when unsponsored but ample and delicious and provided a time for members to gather and socialize.
  - Adult learning sessions occurred after most morning services on an array of topics and Torah studies led by Rabbi Goldberg and member volunteers. Thank you to Jonathan Silin for inspiring and organizing this series. These sessions will continue in coming months.
  - We continue to have long term partnerships with our venue hosts, the MNJCC and First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto.
  - We continue to reach out to Jewish Family and Child services' clients who we provide free tickets to our High Holy Days services and Erev dinner.
  - We partnered the Holocaust Education Committee and Association for Learning and Preserving the History of Asians during World War Two on sexual slavery of women by the Japanese army during Holocaust Education Week.
  - We held five contemplative services led by Lorne Blumer with increasing attendance and interest. More planned for upcoming year
  - We were sponsors of the Daniel Pearl Foundation's Music Day during the High Holy Days dedicating the music of Kol Nidrei to the cause.
  - We also participated in Tikkun Shavuot, Rainbow Railroad during Pride, Heart to Heart and met with Hand to Hand director
- Board Member and Staff Recognition
  - Thank you to all for carry the load of the unglamorous work behind the scenes to keep our congregation functioning smoothly. Two board members who are leaving are thanked – Harriet and Justine.
  - Harriet – Thanked for all her work over the last fourteen years. She had a vision what this once High Holy Day shul and she continues to pour all of her energies into building this community. The ordination she coordinated was an excellent example of what the full potential of the community she spearheaded building.

- Justine – Thanked for her work on the board and especially her work on World Pride especially her focus of collaborating with community partners and beyond.
- Natalie – Thanked for her patience, welcoming our congregants and helping to organize many events this year including the High Holy Days, World Pride and the ordination.
- *Comments resulting from report:*
  - Elizabeth Abraham commented we should recognize Jamie's leadership especially during World Pride multi-pride movement and all the events. Harriet Eisenkraft agrees the attempt to include the larger wider community and keeping us in the center was great.
  - Zev commented on Jamie's leadership as president of the board and keeping it cohesive.

## 5. Treasurer's Report – Zev Frishman

- Zev spoke of how he sees his role as treasurer is to reconcile community that is very liberal minded with conservative fiscal values to keep our house in order.
- Shir Libeynu is on the right fiscal track. Fairly successful small surpluses over the last few years and we run on a shoestring budget. We have a decent surplus of about \$44000 which gives us a sense of security on the revenue and expense sides.
- Income Statement Revenue is about \$4000, a little lower but similar to previous year.
  - We sold more in single tickets coupled with a little decline in membership
  - We had a decline of event revenues but meshed with revenue side.
  - Other revenues declines due to HST one time recovery of previous years, Kiddush sponsorship and Torah Rentals fees also declined. We are no longer renting the Torah to non-members.
- *Comments resulting from report:*
  - Elizabeth Abraham suggested allowing monthly installments towards purchasing 2016 High Holy Days tickets or memberships. Zev indicated it has practical problems for the administrative expense. We have had bad experience in recovering promises and Harriet Eisenkraft indicated that most people don't know that the board struggles on fiscal situations and how our fees are going to be raised and accountability. There is a lot of staff interaction, costs a lot of money, volunteer time and staff time. It was suggested that we could offer a discount to pay monthly ahead of time or to pay in advance. Conversations are already being had on board. **This should be on board calendar earlier this year.**
  - Zev was thanked for all his work on the financial portfolio.

Motion to accept all reports: Eden Nameri.

Seconded: Laurie Goodman

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

## 6. Introduction of Candidate(s)/Affirmation or Election

- Candidates seeking a second term: Laurie Goodman and Brian Smith
- Candidate seeking first term: Michelle Gewurtz and Amy Herskowitz
  - Michelle Gewurtz introduced herself. She has organized the High Holy Das art show for the first few years. She was really moved with Pride and related havdallah service and is happy to give back.

Motion to accept elect all candidates: Yona Frishman

Seconded: Harriet Eisenkraft

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

## 7. Consideration of Amendments to By-Law To Support Applications Under Ontario's Marriage Act To Enable Congregation Shir Libeynu To Solemnize Marriages (attached to minutes)

- Jamie explained that we need this amendment. In order to register Aviva as our rabbinic leader so that she can solemnize marriages.
- It was noted the number of days of notice of meeting to remove rabbinic leader referred to in section 4.17f is specified in section 4.11

Motion to accept all reports: Elizabeth Abraham

Seconded: Eden Nameri

Motion passed with unanimous consent.

## 8 . Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 12:47 p.m.

## **Confirming By-Law Amendments Adopted by the Board:**

During the year, the board adopted two amendments to the Congregation's by-laws. The purpose of the by-law amendments was to support the Congregation's application under section 20 of Ontario's *Marriage Act* to be recognized by the Province as a "religious body". Since our Congregation is unaffiliated, the Congregation first must be recognized as a "religious body" before the Congregation can request that its duly appointed "religious official" be registered to solemnize marriages under that Act.

The application to be recognized as a "religious body" requires our Congregation's by-laws to contain certain provisions - specifically, provisions governing the appointment of a "religious official" and identifying which member of the Board will serve as the "governing official". A "governing official" satisfies certain administrative requirements, such as ensuring the Congregation's marriage register is properly maintained and ensuring that information filed with the Province is kept up to date.

The Congregation's by-laws require that amendments adopted by the board be confirmed by a two-thirds vote at the next AGM. Below is the text of the two amendments that were adopted by board. During the AGM, a vote will be held on whether to confirm these amendments.

*The by-laws were amended by adding the following section:*

### **4.17.1 Rabbinic Leader**

**This section is concerned with the appointment and removal of the Rabbinic Leader of the Congregation.**

- a. The Rabbinic Leader of the Congregation shall be responsible for all matters relating to the religious and spiritual practices of the Congregation, and for the content of services, and for any additional matters to which the Board and Rabbinic Leader agree.**
- b. The Board shall, by resolution, appoint an individual as the Rabbinic Leader for the Congregation.**
- c. The term of the appointment shall be set by the term of the contract which the Congregation enters into with the Rabbinic Leader.**
- d. The appointment and renewal of appointment of the Rabbinic Leader shall be by a majority vote of the Board.**
- e. The Board may, by resolution, remove the Rabbinic Leader before the end of his or her term if the Rabbinic Leader:**

- has not carried out the responsibilities of a Rabbinic Leader;
- has acted in a manner that is contrary to the best interests, objects or policies of the Congregation; or
- has failed to adhere to the policies and principles of the Congregation

f. Prior to tabling a motion to remove a Rabbinic Leader, the Board must include in the notice of the meeting the Board's intention to consider the resolution at the meeting. The Notice must also include a brief description of the reasons for the proposed resolution.

g. Notice of the meeting must be sent to all Directors and to the Rabbinic Leader.

h. The Rabbinic Leader must be provided with an opportunity to be heard before the Board votes on the resolution.

i. The removal of the Rabbinic Leader shall be by a two thirds majority vote of the Board.

*Section 5.5 of the By-Laws is amended by adding the bolded portion:*

#### 5.5 Duties of the President

Unless another person is authorized by the meeting, the President, when present, chairs all meetings of the members of the Congregation and of the Board of Directors.

The President, with the Secretary or other Officer appointed by the Board to do so, will sign all by-laws and any membership certificates.

**The President shall serve as the "governing official" for the purposes of Ontario's *Marriage Act*. If the President advises the Board that he or she is unable to act as the "governing official", the Board may by resolution select another Director to serve as the "governing official" until such time as the President is able to resume his or her duties as "governing official".**