

Minutes of Congregation Shir Libeynu Annual General Meeting

November 29, 2015

Meeting called to order at 3:12 by Jamie Flagal

1. Welcome/Presentation by Rabbi Aviva Goldberg
 - Thanked all members of congregation and board for everything they have done and will do in the future for the synagogue
 - Thank you to the congregation is on the website but wanted to make another public thank you for the ceremony and party for her ordination
 - Rabbi Goldberg has continued to service the community: conducting life events and High Holy Days and Shabbat services
 - Participation of those working behind the scenes and the bimah aid Rabbi Goldberg in fulfilling these responsibilities
 - On the bimah is Daniela Gesundheit, our wonderful chazzan and musical director who cannot be at the meeting today as she is in Los Angeles; She will be leading our December service; Daniela has asked Rabbi Goldberg to announce that she will be continuing as our High Holy Days chazzan. Due to changes in Daniela's personal and professional life, she will be based in Los Angeles. Daniela will do chazzanut at services when her visits to Toronto coincide with our services. She will continue to mentor our volunteer chazzanim and direct music for all High Holy Days
 - Rabbi Goldberg thanked Paula Wolfson, one of our Shabbat chazzanim who has been at several of our bar/bat mitzvah celebrations
 - Thank you to Lorne Blumer and Justine Apple who co-chazzaned Shabbat services
 - In addition to the our one a month Shabbat services and bar/bat mitzvahs, we also have expanded with contemplative services lead by Lorne and have a group of chanters who meet informally at member's homes (more information on our website); We have incorporated some of the liturgy prayer, chants and meditations to our services
 - Rabbi Goldberg announced that she just received her certificate of registration as a clergy authorized to solemnize marriages in Ontario; and Shir Libeynu is now recognized as a religious body under the Marriage Act by the province. This means that whoever serves as the Rabbinic Leader of our Congregation will have the authority to solemnize marriages under that Act. This is something our Congregation has been striving to achieve for several years.
 - Another definition of a synagogue is a place of instruction-our adult learning program has been initiated and organized by Jonathan Silin; the sessions took place after several Shabbat services and included a 'breakfast with the rabbi' and other sessions by our members. We will continue the sessions this year; include at one more 'breakfast with the rabbi', a session in March with our bar/bat mitzvah group and hope for sessions by our members; speak to Jonathan if you have any ideas
 - As a community, we support each other including through our chesed committee that assisted those in need; contact us if you wish to become involved in this effort

- Urged everyone to stay for the dialogue after the meeting to help us understand what you have appreciated about Shir Libeynu in the past and what you want for the future
- Encourage everyone to go out as Shir Libeynu emissaries or Shlichim and find out what others wish for Shir Libeynu future
- Rabbi Goldberg would like to see a Jewish book club in the coming year

2. Daniela's report – read by Jamie Flagal

- Shir Libeynu has an exciting and whirlwind year
- Bar/bat mitzvah program added many more services to our normal once a month service
- Honoured to meet and correspond directly with the Bar/Bat Mitzvot and their families in preparation of their simchas
- Other activities
 - o Worked with Justine Apple and Penny Winestock to plant seed for future interfaith choir for pride
 - o Brought renowned cellist Coenraad Bloemendal to play at Kol Nidrei
 - o Expanded Shir Libeynu "band" and increased their involvement at Shabbat & High Holy Days services
- Thanked the Shir Libeynu board, Aviva, Jamie, Eden and Harriet for their tireless dedication and involvement
- Thanked Vered Philip, Lorne Blumer, Paula Wolfson, the choir, the Shir Libeynu band and group of cantorial subs for volunteering their time, talents, enthusiasm and heart which elevates Shir Libeynu services and enriches the Shir Libeynu community
- Daniela called in via facetime stating she wished she was at the meeting and will read minutes to find out what happened.

3. Review of Last Year's minutes

Minutes approved by Amy Matchen

Seconded Linda Zelicki

Affirmed unanimously.

Questions/Comments – re minutes:

- Machzor replacement – Rabbi Goldberg will have to find something to replace the current machzor. It took several years to find one last time. It was chosen because it is presented with text which is transliterated, English and Hebrew in a contemporary fashion. It is workable for us. The Machzor by the editor of our siddur is not ideal including it is very big. We may have to put our own together. We are still looking at other options that are appropriate. It was asked if it is possible to get permission to copy the current one by the publisher-we would have to research this. Suggestions of an appropriate machzor are welcome.

4. Report of Jamie Flagal, President

- Is in the last year of his three year term as president. First year term was as secretary, second term as president.
- Found Shir Libeynu after not attending a shul for a long time. At Shir Libeynu everyone was out and a proud not hidden.

- Started involvement by chanting haftorah. Helped put up signs for High Holy Day services and soon after was asked by Joan Atlin to join the board.
 - Five years in, he asked why he does he involve himself in the Shir Libeynu community. Answer lies in the bar mitzvah of Max Rosen that took place recently, le dor va dor. Making sure Judaism is relevant while recognizing it has a capacity to change and be meaningful, and provide a feeling that people want to stay connected to their Judaism.
 - But there are the underlying questions of how do we pay for it and how do we engage members so they want to give back, so this act of community is organic.
 - Since joining the board, Shir Libeynu has added adult education, b'nei mitzvah, our rabbi was ordained, we continue to join other congregations in making the downtown Jewish community more engaged, and most important we celebrate and honour milestones in our lives. We have a choir, a chesed committee, contemplative services and a new website.
 - The challenge is to figure out how to make sure our community is not dependant on a few individuals who do the work; how to we ensure we have a stable foundation
 - Le dor vu dor demand that "you" engage in community building beyond just showing up for High Holy Days services; this is why we are having this exercise-expanding from the few doing all.
 - Thank you to Rabbi Goldberg –showing us what inclusive means while maintaining tradition and for the things you do behind the scenes.
 - Thank you to Daniela.
 - Thank you to Natalie
 - Thank you to Jessica Miller who is leaving the board after serving as vice president and secretary. She has brought compassion and value to the board.
 - Thank you to Zev has been on the board as treasurer for five years. Thank you for the thank less tasks. Reminds us of the importance of financial stability.
 - Thank you to Amy and Michelle who were on the board this year and for their contributions.
 - Thank you to Harriet, our boundless source of "institutional memory". Thank Harriet for all her work on the website, an amazing milestone.
 - Thank you to the board members (Brian Smith, Laurie Goodman, Eden Nameri and j wallace skelton) who are attending the meeting and are continuing their involvement on the board
5. Harriet Eisenkraft's report on Shabbat Coordinating and B'nei Mitzvah program
- Shabbat coordinating involves helping liturgical leaders program/plan upcoming services for the year ahead and arrange bookings with MNJCC; follow through month by month, making sure all details and people (including clergy, volunteers and members wanting to recognize a life cycle event) are place for the services and Kiddushes (some sponsored by members of our shul); oversee Kiddush manager and Joel McCrae
 - 2015, 11 Shabbat services (Saturday mornings, Kabbalat Shabbats, our annual Pride service
 - again participated in Daniel Pearl Days as part of October service
 - several sponsored Kiddushes celebrating/commemorating members' milestones

- Inclusive Practices program which began in 2013 continued in 2014 with Jonathan Silin curating. 4 sessions mostly lead by Rabbi Goldberg; Jonathan planning for some outside community experts on Jewish culture
 - Lorne Blumer, volunteer leader of contemplative services; average attendance-18; 5 services in 2015
 - Chants Re-Encounter has developed out of the contemplatives; one already taken place at a member's home with more to come
- Pride week- we were donors/community partners to Rainbow Railroad and participated in a multi-faith event at Metropolitan church
 - B'nei Mitzvot program
 - started as an idea amongst Rabbi Goldberg, Jonathan Silin, Eden Nameri and Harriet; seen as an important initiative in our shul's future
 - Last year's cohort: 5 children; attended learning program guided by teacher Marilyn Arkin; under leadership of Jonathan Silin and Eden Nameri
 - Harriet Eisenkraft coordinated (was assisted by our administrator) the many details of the four simchas that took place and had some involvement in the learning process;
 - Laurie Goodman, Harriet and our administrator have put together a formula that allows the program to be self-supporting and we have a system in place now to guide the process from booking of the simcha though to the day of the simcha
 - current cohort is 4 children and is lead by Lorin Schwartz, York University professor and high school teacher; we hope some will have a simcha with Shir Libeynu
 - Communication coordination
 - Harriet is editor of the regular newsletter and is of charge of it and the website
 - this year we launched a new website; hired a professional to build it and were aided by the wise, creative input and advice of Rabbi Goldberg, young members Jessica Miller and Elise Eisenkraft Klein
 - Harriet was responsible for all the site content
 - our administrator was responsible for mastering the technical functioning of the website
 - our social media presence increased with many more members to our facebook group
 - our greatest and most effective agents of communication are our members and congregants, sometimes one a time, in a group or at outside events. Keep talking to your family and friends, it makes a difference
6. Zev Frishman, outgoing treasurer: Financial report
- Leaves the financial position in fairly good place. Reserve is about 39,000, good and solid not great. Negative surprises can come. We want to protect ourselves. In the past, we were worried about the possibility of losing some members to other congregations in the community. We have some significant costs coming up. We need a new Torah, can't repair ours. It was checked out by a scribe arranged by Harvey Worth. \$15,000+ even for a used one. Penny was asked about use of her Torah.
 - We had many years of surplus, this year we have a deficit of \$4,700. We are growing, doing much more, shul relies on volunteers; but need more staff to take over some of these responsibilities, this comes with a cost. Even with raised fees we have a manageable deficiency.

- High Holy days revenue (memberships and ticket sales) rose by \$9200 or 13%; Small decline in membership and ticket sales, more than offset by increase in membership fees
- Net of donations to ordinations fund, other revenues (not related to High Holy Days) have stayed relatively stable
- Net of ordination expenses, total expenses have grown by approximately \$18,000
 - o Net income decline of approximately \$9,000 over 2013/2014
 - o Small deficiency of approximately \$4500 for 2014/2015, first in number of years
- Main reasons for increase in expenses
 - o Planned increase in clergy compensation
 - o Increase in daycare costs
 - o Printing of High Holy Days supplements
 - o Event expense
 - o Bar/Bat Mitzvah program
 - o Purchase of Siddurim
 - o Other expenses such as coordinator/bookkeeper, website maintenance and design

Move to accept report by Eden Nameri

Seconded by Brian Smith

Affirmed unanimously.

7. Eden Nameri: Report on Shir Libeynu Programming for Children

- Busy year for children youth and family program
- Thanked Rebecca Sheridan who organizes, runs programs for a modest fee
- We had a fantastic Chanukah party at end of 2014
- We continue to offer Jewish-themed educational activities for the kids during Shabbat services; have a small but consistent core group who attend
- We have switched from child care to children's programming during bar/bat mitzvahs. Includes educational component and well time visit. Goal is courtesy for guests and a recruitment tool
- High Holy days we offered a vibrant program. In addition to basic child care on Erev Rosh Hashanah & Kol Nidre, we added a new early bird program for kids and families, attendance expectations were exceeded. Rosh Hashanah day one had stories, games, crafts and a visit from Chazzan Gesundheit. On Rosh Hashanah day two we made challah. Both days the kids visited the service. Goal for next year increasing attendance time in service especially during musical segments. Yom Kippur engaged kids and parents attended a service led by Jamie Flagal that ran at same time as main service. Good feedback. We also had workshop attended by a small group of 9-pre bnei mitzvah aged children. Free childcare during Yom Kippur workshops followed by a healthy crop of kids at Neilah.
- This year we staffed the High Holy days with mostly high school volunteers, mentored by Rebecca, gets our kids involved. Even middle school kids get involved. Kids are increasingly more a part of our community. 2015 High Holy days was less staff and more volunteers.

- Will work with Aviva and Rebecca on more ways to integrate kids into our community
- Members/congregants are encouraged to invite people you know with children to our services. Next one is a Friday night. Kids will be coming into the service for 5-10 minutes into the main service, having an active program for the kids within the service. We are bringing kids into the service at appropriate time to have them more involved.

8. New Board Members

- Two new members of the Board, Barry Benigson and Barbara Center.
 - o Barbara spoke about her connection to Shir Libeynu which allows her to honour her spiritual roots and sexual orientation in a safe and open community. She spoke about the support she had during her cancer diagnosis and treatment. This is her opportunity to give back. She comes to the position with experience in the non-profit section and looks forward to working with others to grow Shir Libeynu.
 - o Barry is a chartered accountant who has sat on his condominium board and worked with non-profits. He has been coming to Shir Libeynu with his partner since 2000 and looks forward to helping the community. Hopes to take on the role of Shir Libeynu treasurer.

Miriam Benson moved to elect Barbara Center and Barry Benigson.

Erin Claman seconded

Affirmed unanimously.

- We have a board of seven, by-laws allow for seven to eleven directors. Those interested in the board should see Jamie.

9. No other business

10. Meeting adjourned.

Brian Smith moved to adjourn the meeting.

Eden Nameri seconded

Affirmed unanimously.

38 people signed in as attending the meeting.

Annual General meeting was followed by a short break and then the Creating Our Future Dialogue took place.