

OR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE
KOL NIDRE CO-CHAIR SPEECH 2011/5772

Shana Tova. We warmly welcome you on this beautiful Yom Kippur night.

Recently, I heard an interview on CBC radio with a young folk singer, a man in his 20's. When asked about his musical inspiration, he replied, "a couple of years ago I discovered Leonard Cohen and his music has become an important influence for me."

That CBC interview got me thinking about Or Shalom, and the parallels between folk music and Jewish tradition. It made me think that keeping meaningful music alive is like keeping Judaism alive for people to discover any time.

All of us have made the choice to be here at Or Shalom on Yom Kippur 5772. We have made a choice to be part of the living expression of our Jewish traditions, prayers, and community.

And, when we maintain these traditional resources, they will be here for us and for others, now and in the future.

Speaking of resources, our first annual community-wide Or Shalom campaign ran from Pesach to Shavuot. Or Shalom members were very generous and we thank you. Two-thirds of us participated, with gifts ranging from \$36 to \$10,000 for a total of \$136,000 raised this year.

We apologize if you were not contacted by one of our canvassers. You are, of course, welcome to make a gift to Or Shalom anytime, and we look forward to continuing the conversation with all of you this coming year between Pesach and Shavuot.

Thanks to the campaign success, we will begin recruiting a full-time program manager after the holidays. Please spread the word that we are accepting applications!

And speaking of programming, this past year Or Shalom hosted a wide range of wonderful learning events. We will mention a few highlights.

- We welcomed guest Rabbi Elliot Ginsberg for a Shabbaton.
- We held three Kabbalat Shabbats that specifically welcomed lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer people.
- With hundreds of organizations around the world we joined in a virtual rally with the Israel-based Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.
- Reb Laura and other Or Shalom members taught wonderful classes on topics ranging from Talmud to Heschel to tie-dye.
- A compassionate care workshop taught us more about acts of loving kindness in our own community.
- An inter-generational group of women studied the Book of Ruth and held a Tikkun Leyl Shavuot program.
- We continued our Exploring Judaism class for adults and our family shabbats with learning for children and their parents.
- And of course we had the fantastic Or Shalom Retreat at Camp Hope.

Our Young Adult Community, known as YAC, has been very active. This group has put a lot of energy towards building a lively and creative community. A recent highlight was a 100-mile potluck dinner held last week that was enjoyed by about 40 people.

Or Shalom's biblical garden of fruits, vegetables, and grains that are mentioned in

the Torah continues to thrive. This year, we had a unique opportunity to plant and harvest heritage wheat and barley from one member's family farm in Saskatchewan. Join us next week in our sukkah to taste a most delicious soup from our biblical garden crops!

This fall, we have much planned for people of all ages and interests. The next Family Shabbat will be October 29th. In the coming year, we will be expanding this Shabbat program with an innovative curriculum and of course lots of enthusiasm.

Reb Laura will teach a course on modern Jewish thought. Join us for an evening course on papercuts, a Jewish folk art, taught by Roberta Kremer. Seema Berson will lead a talk on Eastern European Jewish Immigrants based on her book, "I Have a Story to Tell You."

Please read the weekly Friday afternoon email bulletin, the *Doar Shalom*, to read up on all the goings on.

We've learned so much in our two years as co-chairs. As you can imagine, Or Shalom members have many perspectives on almost everything, including membership at Or Shalom.

We have about 200 member families. We hope that those of you who are members will continue to be members, whether you participate a little or a lot during the year. We like to say that it's not about attendance; it's about being part of a Jewish community, and calling Or Shalom your community.

We also have several hundred High Holiday Participants who make a financial contribution each year. Thank you for your support. We also welcome you to become Or Shalom members this year.

We ask those of you who come to our High Holiday services but have not yet made a contribution to do so after Yom Kippur. We need all of you to support Or Shalom so we can continue to be a vibrant community all year long and at the high holydays.

On behalf of all of us, we thank the Board of Directors and all of the many volunteers. We are grateful for the multitude of roles that our rabbi, Reb Laura Duhan Kaplan, and her partner, Charles Kaplan, take on so brilliantly. We also thank Lily Salja for her strong, steady hand as our office administrator.

As we look to the new year, 5772, we encourage everyone to be even more involved at Or Shalom. Try something new. Say hello to a person you've never met. Learn a new prayer. Bring your children to a Family Shabbat. Attend an adult education event. Clear some plates from the Kiddush lunch—it can begin with something as simple as that.

Find new ways to keep Or Shalom and Judaism alive—whatever ways are meaningful for you.

Please take the good energy present tonight into your hearts, your families, and your communities.

Shana Tova. G'mar hatimah tovah,

-- *Adele Ritch and Laura Rosenthal*