



GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Martha Barker

Meet Martha Barker (née Lepawsky), one of the folks on Or Shalom's membership committee. Originally from the US, she is married to John and the couple has four children and two grandchildren.

Martha began her studies in journalism, but on a two-year academic exchange in Denmark, changed her goal to ceramics. On returning to the US, she took a BFA (ceramics), an MA, and a lifetime teaching credential.

Arts are a source of inspiration for her. She has a pottery studio, built by husband John at the back of the Barker home. She is also fascinated that this craft, amongst the many crafts familiar in biblical narrative, is mentioned in the Torah. One of her favourite Yom Kippur prayers is *We Are but Clay in Potters' Hands*. For Martha, the transformation of artisanal materials is an allegory for *tikkun olam*. "G-d put us in this world to change it with what we have around us, to learn to understand nature and human interactions, part of the tapestry G-d is trying to create," she says.

She is passionate about languages and speaks English, Danish, passable Spanish, and a smattering of German.

Martha lives in North Vancouver and has helped to organize the North Shore Shabbat (NSS), partnering with Rabbi Hannah of Or Shalom, Rabbi Philip Gibbs of Har El, and Hannah Yerington, Outreach Worker with Connect Me In (Jewish Federation).

The Barkers' son, Joey, has Down Syndrome. Twenty years ago, the family joined with other North Shore parents and friends of people with developmental disabilities to form the Cascadia Society, which now provides a vibrant community, a day program, and a residential component.

You will often meet Martha and Joey at Or Shalom on Shabbat. When you do, ask her how she was inspired to help others by her mother's struggle to protect and grant rights to African Americans during pre-civil rights activity in the Southern United States.