



Portland, ORE  
An Affiliate of the  
Society for Humanistic Judaism

Salt & Pepper shakers. Paris, 2008. Photo by JP.

Humanistic Judaism embraces a human-centered connection to Jewish culture, values and heritage. Our goal is to create a context for our diverse Jewish and intercultural members. Kol Shalom is about sharing and celebrating life's passages, challenges and joys as friends, as family, and as a community.

*SUNDAY FORUM,  
FEBRUARY 1,  
9:45—12:00, MJCC*

**Adoption and Identity: "First Person Plural"**

Bob Liebman is a faculty member of the Institute for Judaic Studies at PSU as well as a professor of Sociology at the same university. 2008 was a sabbatical year for Bob when he was a visiting scholar at the Department of Sociology, Hebrew University doing research on faculty unions and strikes in Israel.

Bob has a strong interest in the quintessential American process of attempting—and often struggling-- to integrate diverse identities (e.g., the "melting pot") and he continues to share that interest with us. In September, 2007, Bob presented a

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**Kol Shalomers Tour New SW Health Clinic And They Walk, Work, and Give**

Second Sunday afternoon again, and a full dozen of us (counting Auggie, the doggie) walked the neighborhoods and parks of SW Portland in support of the SW Community Health Clinic. Visiting with our allies from other institutions as we went -- our Elissa Burian got acquainted with the board member from St. Clare Church, as they led the

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**Ritual News**

Note the two upcoming events: **Friday, January 23rd Shabbat**, shortly after 7 p.m. at the MJCC ballroom, our normal meeting place. Some Music Makers will perform, with an informal discussion after the service. Items to choose from for the discussion include your dreams for the world (in honor of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr), changes you'd personally like to make this year (in tribute to President Barack Obama's inauguration), and supporting each other dur-

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**President's Message**

I would like to spend some time and space this month telling you about some changes to the Kol Shalom Board of Directors. In a retreat in September, the board members identified priority areas for Kol Shalom. Based on the work at the retreat, the Executive Committee (comprised of the Kol Shalom officers) has put together a work plan to identify and track our goals and objectives.

The 5 priority areas are:

- Children's Education
- General and Young Adult Membership
- Membership Volunteering and Engagement
- Board Organization
- Kol Shalom Community Involvement

This is very much a work in progress as the board continues to identify specific strategies to advance our overall objectives of increasing our membership, enhancing our education programs, making volunteer roles easier and more

*(Continued on page 8)*

CONNECT.....

CELEBRATE....

EDUCATE

# UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
1/17 Saturday	10:30a.m.	Music Makers practice – Kol Shalom Center
	2:00 p.m.	Yiddish Group – KS Center
1/18 Sunday	9:45 a.m.	Children’s Education – MJCC
1/23 Friday	7:00 p.m.	Shabbat celebration: Challenging Times—MJCC
1/25 Sunday	2:00 p.m.	Welcoming social – Jane’s home, Walker Road (not Temple Beth Israel)
1/28 Wednesday	11:00 a.m.	Sounding Board discussion group – KS Center
1/31 Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oregon Food Bank volunteering
<b>FEBRUARY</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
2/01 Sunday	9:45 a.m.	Children’s Education—MJCC
		Sunday Forum: First Person Plural—MJCC
2/04 Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Executive Board meeting—KS Center
2/05 Thursday	7:00 p.m.	Social Action Committee—KS Center
2/08 Sunday	1:00 p.m.	PR Committee Meeting—KS Center
	2:00 p.m.	Community Walk with/for SW Community Health Center
	5:00 p.m.	Tu B'Shevat Seder and video—KS Center
2/11 Wednesday	11:00 a.m.	Sounding Board Group—KS Center
2/14 Saturday	9:30 a.m.	KS Board Meeting—KS Center
	1:30 p.m.	Jewish Culture Study Group—KS Center
2/15 Sunday	9:45 a.m.	Children’s Education—MJCC
		Sunday Forum: Why I Am a Humanist?—MJCC
2/18 Wednesday	1:30 p.m.	Book Discussion: “Stubborn Twig” by Lauren Kessler
2/19 Thursday		Interfaith Advocacy Day—Oregon State Capitol
2/22 Sunday	10:30 a.m.	Music Makers practice—KS Center
2/25 Wednesday	11:00 a.m.	Sounding Board Discussion Group—KS Center
2/27 Friday	7:00 p.m.	Shabbat Celebration: I Believe - MJCC
2/28 Saturday	9:00 a.m.	Oregon Food Bank volunteering
	6:00 p.m.	Havdallah Potluck Dinners—member homes

*DARFUR POSTCARD BRIGADE UPDATE:  
END-OF-THE-YEAR SALE!*

The Kol Shalom Darfur Action Group has been able to streamline our system and thus reduce the cost of producing advocacy postcards. Starting January 1, 2009, the fee for our monthly postcards will be \$3.00 instead of \$5.00. We hope this will be an incentive to more of our membership and friends of members to participate. We would greatly appreciate it if you would send six-month fees (\$18.00) to the Kol Shalom office. Please write the check to Kol Shalom, with "Darfur" on the memo line.

We would like to express our gratitude to all of you who gave donations as holiday gifts supporting our other projects: Jewish World Watch Solar Cooker Ovens, and the Stop Genocide Now fund to build schools for camp refugees. These gifts are needed and well-used. Thank you!

*Diane, Ruth, Eva, Muriel*

*(Continued from page 1)*

documentary film, "Mixed Blessings," which was a composite portrait of four interfaith couples who were faced with how to accommodate their differences and how to devise strategies for raising their children. For the February Forum, once again, with the use of a film, Bob will be exploring with us very complicated issues of disparate identities and the struggle to integrate them. Bob is presenting another film, "**First Person Plural**," a documentary made by Deann Borshay who was among thousands of South Korean orphans sent to the U.S. in the 1960's to be adopted and raised by American families. The film is a personal documentary that tells the story of Deann Borshay's sometimes heart-breaking attempts to integrate into her life two different families, cultures, languages, and loyalties.

Please invite friends, relatives and neighbors and arrive at 9:45 a.m. at MJCC, Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup>. We will start promptly at 10:00.

*Muriel Adler, Chair*

LIVING HUMANISTIC VALUES

**SUNDAY FORUM, FEBRUARY 15, MJCC 9:45 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

Retired Social Work Professor Arnold Panitch will talk on his experience of "Living Humanistic Values." Arnie has a reputation of being a lively, humorous, interesting teller of tales. He grew up in Detroit, attending public schools and universities. He is the son of immigrants from Europe. Both of his parents were hard-working **Yiddishe Arbiters** (literally, Jewish workers) who had little time for much more than work. He attended after-school Hebrew school for *bar mitzvah* training. Arnie taught social work at the University of Illinois-Urbana and at Boise State in Idaho where his specialty was community organizing. He was active in the 1960's with the Congress of Racial Equality, in the 1970's with the United Farm Workers Union, and in Idaho, supporting the enactment of the Martin Luther King holiday law. He is on the Board of Direc-

tors of Community Partners for Affordable Housing\* which lobbied for the Sears Armory site for family housing and built Watershed at the Hillsdale Senior Citizens Building. Arnie lives in Hillsdale and has been in Portland for five years. He will share some of his life's experiences relating them to Humanism. He is a member of the Humanists of Greater Portland and moderated their Sunday programs for a few years.

\*Sheila Fink, Kol Shalom member, is Executive Director of this organization.

**Mark your calendars, invite your friends and neighbors for Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 9:45-12:00, at MJCC.**

*Muriel Adler, Chair  
Program Committee*

"Interfaith Advocacy Day" Means Kol Shalom Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon includes the Jewish Federation's Community Relations Council in its annual "Advocacy Day", speaking to state Legislators about social issues. That includes us, and all Jewish institutions who are concerned and take action for social justice. Kol Shalom did not participate last year, being heavily involved in organizing the "Lobby Day for Health Care Reform" and going to Salem with others in MACG and "Oregonians for Health Security." We'll surely do that again this Spring.

Now - with a new and responsive state Legislature, the promise of funding from Washington (S-CHIP: money to states for children's health insurance programs), and with the governor's lead - we can join others in telling of the need to support what we believe in: Education, Health, Jobs and peaceful and well-tended communities.

**Watch for more detailed information**, as we receive it from the CRC, by e-mail. And, **save the date, February**

**19th**, in Salem. The ecumenical group will meet at 709 Marion street in Salem, for a morning of "training" and lunch. Then, a walk to the state capitol and group visits to legislators.

**What to do now?** Call, write or e-mail your own state legislators (a senator and a representative) about your major concern. Don't know your new legislator? Ask your social action committee. That information is available with your street address through the Oregon Legislature website, and soon through our KS office, where our own office administrator is adding this to her membership list.

When you contact a legislator, name a specific Bill, if you can. The essence of health care reform is now labeled -- **HB 2009!**

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one-mile walk (with time for a social coffee after!) Many took on the five-mile walk and saw more of the hilly neighborhoods, and some joined the three-mile walk, circling Gabriel Park, crossing through its forest, wetlands, orchard and gardens, and passing a soccer game. **Join us February 8th, Sunday, at 2PM. We'll meet outside, at 7754 SW Capitol Highway.**

All (35 or so walkers) were treated to a tour of the clinic's new facility, the street level brick building at the above address, and very much under re-construction inside: being transformed from a business to a clinic. We saw the bones of six (!) exam rooms, clinic bathrooms, with handicap-access, and at last, a spacious waiting room for patients and a tiny kitchen for the staff and volunteers. The move is necessary. Not only because of the over-crowding in the two rooms of the Multnomah Arts Center but because Neighborhood House needs the space back, with increasing demand for their

many services to the aged and low-income families.

We've been supporting the Clinic with volunteer labor, donations and on their Ecumenical Support Board. Marsha Cooper, Ann Kruss and Selma Zack have continued to provide healthy food for the evening medical staffers, who come straight from work; and others in Kol Shalom have asked how they can help. A single request for donations late in 2008 brought in a total of \$670 from 11 KS members, helping to secure the clinic's matching grant from a foundation. So, **thank you! Kol Shalom volunteers and donors!**

And now that the clinic's move is coming-- January 31st -- **More help is needed.** Some indoor painting in late January. Some boxing up of materials in the old office. Then, on Jan. 30 and 31, moving it all by hand-truck the 200 feet from the Art Center to the new Clinic. **To offer help, phone the clinic: 503-977-0733. Identify yourself as a Kol Shalomer!**

## Community Relations Committee (CRC) Jewish Federation of Greater Portland

At the January 7 meeting, **Akiva Tor**, Israel's Consul General (for the Pacific Coast states) participated through a conference call and gave an update of the conflict in Gaza from the Israeli government's perspective. The Federation's lobbyist in Salem, **Mr. Alan Tressider**, indicated that a meeting will be arranged for the CRC with Senator Merkely and Congressman Schraeder in the near future.

**Rich Meyer**, president of the CRC, reported on the second meeting of representatives of the Jewish community of greater Portland to deal with the recession's impact on the Jewish and general community, which took place on January 6. A taskforce comprised of several members of the CRC, chaired by **Dr. David Douglas** of Beth Israel, reported on its analyses of a number of draft resolutions and expressions of concern that will be discussed and voted on at the forthcoming JCPA Plenum in February in Washington, DC.

The full membership of the CRC voted, unanimously or by overwhelming majorities, to support resolutions to address the growing problem of hunger and such underlying causes as poor health care and difficulty in obtaining a living wage; much more accessible and robust early childhood education; and reforms in the measurement of poverty, which is grossly out of date and

fails to identify (for benefits and programs) large portions of the population living in poverty.

The CRC also supported, with qualifications and recommendations to its delegates to the Plenum to speak for specific revisions, resolutions regarding reforms of the criminal justice system -- including adding a provision concerning capital punishment, sentencing guidelines and a consideration of the true societal costs of the incarceration and poor preparation for reentry of the record number of prisoners in federal and state prisons; and a resolution on Muslim-Jewish relations, calling for avoiding the stigmatization of all Muslims following terrorist attacks by small numbers of extremists.

The taskforce recommended that, instead of supporting the resolution before it, the CRC support the concept of a comprehensive energy policy that addresses climate change, the protection of the environment, national security and the stimulation of local economies. Finally, the CRC discussed once more and agreed to propose, together with the American Jewish Committee, a resolution of concern at the Washington, DC Plenum, introduced by a member of the CRC, **Arden Shenker**.  
**Martin Heisler**

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*(Continued from page 1)*

ing these economically challenging times (in memory of the outgoing administration). People whose last names begin R-Z are encouraged to bring a healthful snack for the oneg. Feel free to bring friends. This evening should prove to lead to some interesting sharing.

**Sunday, February 8th**, 5 p.m. at the Kol Shalom Center. Environmentally focused video in honor of Tu Bishvat, Judaism's tribute to trees and a responsibly managed environment. Video title

TBA. Please feel free to recommend some titles either to my e-mail or via Kol Shalom's new chat line. Do not recommend *An Inconvenient Truth*, as wonderful as it is, since we all ready saw it last year during Tu Bishvat. The evening also includes a *short* Tu Bishvat seder.

Happy Ground Hog Day.  
**Jon Dickman, Kol Shalom Ritual Director**

## MAKE FRIENDS! HAVE FUN!

The calendar on page 2 lists activities that welcome everyone. Some of them may be things you'd enjoy. All you have to do is show up and find out if it's for you.

- **Jewish Culture study group** – Now in year 2 of a 3-year course using a curriculum by Rabbi Adam Chalom, Dean of the Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. (Year 1 was Jewish History.) Even if you've missed what's already been covered, you'll learn new things and enjoy participating in the discussions.
- **Music Makers** – Like to sing? Play an instrument? If you've been to any of our celebrations, you've heard the Music Makers. Their music adds a lot to our events, and they have fun, too.
- **Oregon Food Bank** – Adults and children meet at the Food Bank to sort and package food for hungry people, and visit while doing it.
- **Social Action** – You see regular reports of this group's activities in *News & Views*. 'nuff said!

- **Sounding Board** – Moderator Irv Adler picks some topics from the news and offers them for discussion. Participants also bring up hot topics. Discussion is lively and stimulating and we learn more about what's going on.
- **Sunday Forum** – Originally started as an activity during the KS Sunday School sessions, for parents with children in the program, but has attracted others also. A variety of programs are offered during the school year, often with a speaker/presenter and always with open discussion.
- **Yiddish Group** – For beginners to long-time Yiddish speakers. Learn new phrases, practice conversation, and laugh a lot.

Find out more about all of these activities on our website, [www.kolshalom.org](http://www.kolshalom.org).

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES—A REMINDER

If you're not a KS volunteer, or taking part in an interest group, you're not getting the most from your membership! These are great ways to be a part of the activities and growth of our community, to enrich our offerings, and to enjoy the experience, the friendships, and the pleasure of working and playing together with other members.

Year-round committees include:

**Children's Education** – Plan special activities for students and help with them.

**Fund Raising** – Currently not an active committee, but good ideas are very welcome.

**Havdalah Potlucks** – Help the Coordinator call people for hosting and attending, new ideas welcome.

**Membership** – Help plan activities to attract new members/retain members; telephone, e-mail prospective members to get acquainted and invite them to events, etc.

**Mishpoche** (“family”) – Let the Mishpoche Chair know about ways you'd be able to help other members when needed: calling, visiting, preparing food, giving rides, helping with life cycle celebrations, etc.

**Program** – Help plan, organize, and participate in programs of interest to our members.

**Public Relations/Marketing** – Plan publicizing of events, create ads and flyers, attempt to raise our profile and understanding of our philosophy in the Jewish community and beyond.

**Ritual** – Work with Ritual Director, thinking of themes for Shabbats and activities for other celebrations, review and revise ceremonies as advised. Participate in ceremonies, as a leader, reader, speaker, etc.

**Shabbat** – Mainly help with set-up and clean-up at Shabbat celebrations, about once a month.

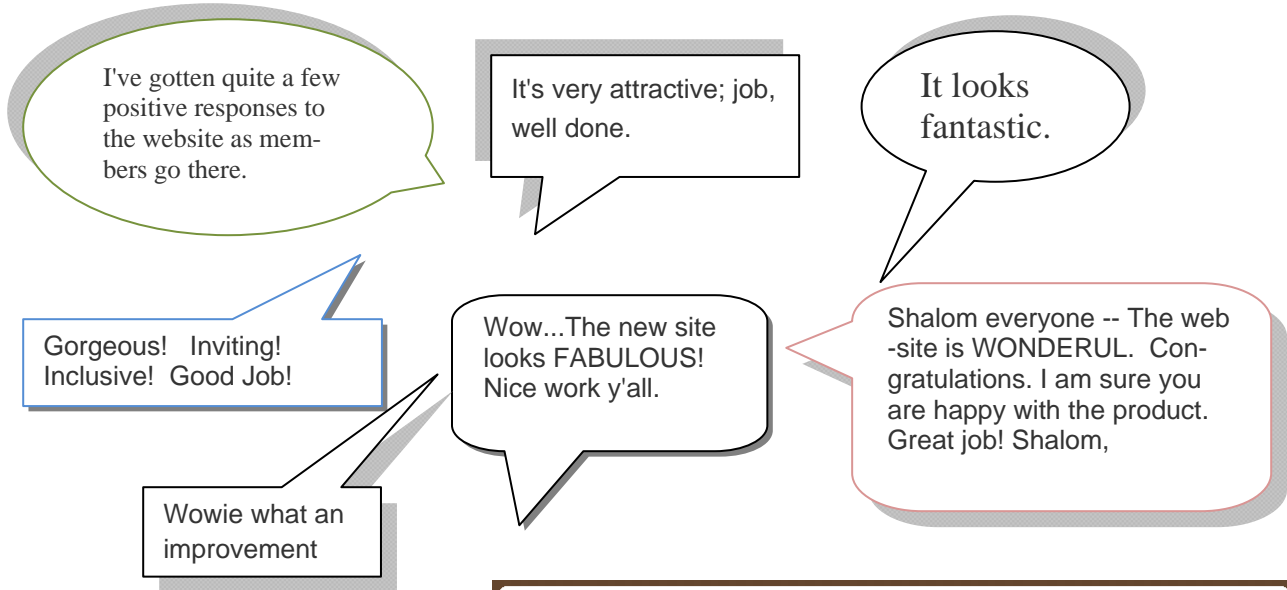
**Social Action** – Many activities, as described in regular newsletter reports.

Ad Hoc Committees/Task Forces:

High Holidays, Chanuka Party, Sukkot Celebration, Purim Party, Passover Seder, other events that might come up. Work with Ritual Committee, Program Committee and PR Committee on all aspects of planning and producing any one of these events. Occasional help in the office is also appreciated.

## What About the Web

Thanks to all of you who sent kudos and positive comments on the new KS Web site. Not to ring our own bell (too much), but here is a sampling.



All members should now have personal passwords to the new Members Only page. If you do not (or if you want to change your password to something that's easier for you to remember), please contact me.

The Members Area is set up to securely contain all of the KS information that we would like to keep just within the organization. Several of our docs are available in electronic form and could be stored here for any member to access: *KS News and Views* issues that include member donations and life cycle events, an up-to-date Biography compilation, member contact information, and perhaps some additional things and activities that our members will dream up.



**Ellen Carlin**

### MYSTERY ??? MAVEN

**Who am I?** I am a descendant from the illustrious Italian-Jewish family whose name is an Italian translation of the Hebrew family name, "Me-Ha'Adumim". My ancestry traces back to the exiles from Jerusalem, carried away to Rome by the Emperor Titus in the year 70. I am a violinist and composer. In the field of instrumental music I am a bold innovator. I am one of the first composers to apply to instrumental music the principles of monodic song, in which one melody dominates over secondary accompanying parts. In me you see the apex of the Jewish participation in my era.

If you know who I am, email your answer to [debi@t-h-e-b-e-s-t.com](mailto:debi@t-h-e-b-e-s-t.com). My identity will be revealed in next month's issue of *Kol Shalom's News & Views*.

If you have a Mystery Maven suggestion, please send it to [debi@t-h-e-b-e-s-t.com](mailto:debi@t-h-e-b-e-s-t.com). We welcome all mavens and menschen.

## LIBRARY NEWS

Great thanks to Gary Sampson, who has volunteered to take on the tasks of keeping our KS library organized. With a Master of Library Science degree and retired as librarian at PSU, Gary is more than qualified to keep our library up to date, incorporating new acquisitions that are donated into the indexes of our books and publications by

title, author, and subject. The library keeps growing; you might want to look over the many interesting and educational works on Judaism, Humanistic Judaism, Jewish history and sociology, Jewish education, religion in general, fiction, etc. The Indexes are usually in the KS office to help you look for an area of interest.

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## ALL IN THE FAMILY

We are pleased to welcome new member Sara Mejia Weinstein. Sara hails from Colombia, S.A. Her husband is disabled and much of Sara's time is divided between him and their daughter Mariani, age 11, who is a first-year Mitzvah class student.

Beaverton area during tax season. She has a daughter and a small grandchild in California.

We are pleased to welcome new member and old friend Sharon Lezin. Her first brush with Kol Shalom was in 2004, when she was working with the Democratic Party in Washington Co. and helped with Irv Adler's birthday party on the same night as the Democratic Convention. Since then she has participated in Seders and High Holidays. Sharon is an attorney and she volunteers to help in disasters in the US and other parts of the world, and runs an H&R Block office in the

We are sorry to say goodbye to KS member Judy Mellow, who relocated to New Mexico in December. Judy is looking for a publisher for her recently-completed novel and we look forward to being able to buy copies (using Scrip for Powell's or Border's, of course!)

Welcome to Emily Duvdevany, who was born on January 7 to parents Dalia and Roman. Emily's big sister Shirley is 6, and in our Children's Education Aleph class. In between is another sister who is 4 years old.

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## DON'T FORGET TWO UPCOMING SOCIAL EVENTS

A get-acquainted social at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 25 at Jane Goldhamer's house in Beaverton. This does not take place at Temple Beth Israel, as announced in the 1/13 "What's Happening at the MJCC" email. Learn more about Humanistic Judaism and Kol Shalom, meet people, have dessert, see our Rabbi Sherwin Wine video. Call Jane to RSVP, 503-297-4288.

Havdalah potlucks on Saturday evening, February 28 at various host homes. Call Potluck Coordinator Norma Rowe (503-641-2770) to be a guest or to volunteer as a host. Small, informal events, good conversation and good food. Children welcome, as well as everyone else.

*(Continued from page 1) Presidents Message*

satisfying, and ensuring that Kol Shalom is represented whenever appropriate in the wider Jewish community. Please contact any member of the board if you are interested in learning more about our work or have ideas to share.

One realization at the retreat was that perhaps too much time was spent in preparing for and attending Board meetings, and the board has voted to decrease, at the next election, the number of at-large directors. We will also

streamline our committee reporting process and may change the frequency of our meetings. Three current Board members, Elly Adelman, Carl and Sheila Fink, and Gary Sampson, have chosen to resign their places on the Board and shift their efforts and energies to our committees and events. The Board thanks them for their exceptional level of involvement with Kol Shalom, and their talents in keeping Kol Shalom viable.

**Roberta**



**GEMISHT  
aka "Mixture"**

Got something to announce? Something you want to get off your chest? Kvetch? Praise someone's efforts?

So long as it's legal and (hopefully) tasteful, put it here!

Jews are rallying for justice for the 570,000 people who live in the District of Columbia without federal voting rights

The Reform Movement is also promoting Washington D.C. voting rights, viewing it as an issue of Jewish justice and morality. Many Jews and many SHJ members live in D.C., but treating the issue as one of civil rights and fairness frames it so that people living elsewhere can ask their federal elected officials to support DC voting rights to give residents of DC the same rights afforded to US citizens in the rest of the country.

When you support DC voting rights as a social justice issue, without supporting any particular piece of legislation or a candidate, you are acting totally in compliance with your 501 (c) (3) status. Clearly if Reform congregations can speak out for voting rights, our congregations can, too.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism has adopted a resolution supporting federal voting rights for residents of Washington DC .

District of Columbia residents are the constituents of NO representative or senator, but of course they pay federal taxes as well as local ones. The federal government exercises control that does not apply anywhere else in the country over how locally collected taxes may be used in the District. They need YOU to contact YOUR senators and representatives to say that it is time for civil rights for all American citizens. The House passed legislation in support of DC voting rights in 2007 but the Senate did not. President-elect Obama is in support – this year the chances are improved.

Jewish organizations are now working together to

make this issue a Jewish Justice issue. We humanists can do our part. Please call your senators and representative TODAY and say that you support the same voting rights for the citizens of the District of Columbia as are available to citizens in the rest of the United States . For more information on steps you can take to help, go to [www.dcvote.org](http://www.dcvote.org).

**SHJ Statement in Support of Voting Representation for the District of Columbia**

In a representative democracy, all citizens must be heard. In our nation, citizens must have the ability, through freely elected leaders, to shape the laws under which they must live. In Washington, D.C., more than half a million Americans live without voting representation in Congress and therefore no vote on issues that matter the most to them.

As humanists, we work for equal treatment under the law for all human beings. It is not acceptable to us that a part of our population is treated unjustly.

Therefore, we support and pledge to work for the establishment of full voting representation in Congress for the residents of the District of Columbia , with the goal of all Americans having a voice in their legislative future.

Adopted October 2008



**GEMISHT  
aka "Mixture"**

# A MEN'S NIGHT OUT... YOU CAN BET ON

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2009  
6 PM**

**MITTLEMAN JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER  
6651 SW CAPITOL HIGHWAY**

**The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland Presents  
Jonathan Greenblatt, Founder of Ethos Water,  
Speaking on Social Entrepreneurship and Jewish Values.  
Join friends afterward to play poker, blackjack and roulette.**

**Learn about a worthy mission –  
and gamble on a good time.**

**\$45 per person**

**Includes tasty appetizers and hearty buffet dinner  
and 3% to Mazon - a Jewish Response to Hunger**

**Stay and game:  
Additional \$30 Buy-In**

**You will have an opportunity to make your commitment  
to the Jewish Federation's 2009 Annual Campaign.**

**Kosher meal provided by Cafe at the J**

**To: SHJ Community Leaders, Rabbis, Administrators & SHJ Board Members,**

**We have all been looking forward to summer 2009 and the first ever Taglit Birthright Israel trip for cultural, secular and Humanistic Jews. However, due to the current economic climate and Taglit Birthright Israel 's very limited allocation of seats for this summer, we have been told that, as of now, there will not be a HuJews trip this summer. Should things change, we'll let you, our members and communities, and everyone on the interest list know as quickly as possible.**

**HuJews and the Society for Humanistic Judaism will continue working to facilitate a trip organized through Israel Experience Ltd., a subsidiary of the Jewish Agency for Israel, in the future. The trip will be designed specifically with Humanistic, cultural and secular Jews in mind.**

**We will continue to collect information from those interested in participating in a Taglit-Birthright Israel : Israel Experience Trip for Cultural Jews in the future. Please ask your young people aged 18-26 who are interested to e-mail AJ Chalom at [aj@hujews.org](mailto:aj@hujews.org) with their name, address, e-mail, and phone to be added to an interest list. We will send information to everyone on our list about future trips and how to register when such information becomes available.**

**We are hopeful that a trip will be possible in the future.**

**Shalom,**

**Bonnie**

**M. Bonnie Cousens, Executive Director  
Society for Humanistic Judaism  
[bonniecousens@shj.org](mailto:bonniecousens@shj.org)**

Rabbi Miriam Jerris was in Jacksonville , FL meeting with a prospective community. About 50 people were there, including a lot of young people. The following link is the local press coverage about her visit and about Humanistic Judaism.

[http://jacksonville.com/lifestyles/values\\_and\\_religion/2009-01-13/story/humanistic\\_jews\\_belief\\_in\\_god\\_is\\_a\\_tricky\\_thing](http://jacksonville.com/lifestyles/values_and_religion/2009-01-13/story/humanistic_jews_belief_in_god_is_a_tricky_thing)

## Humanistic Jews: 'Belief in God is a tricky thing'

BY [JEFF BRUMLEY](#)

- STORY UPDATED AT 5:26 PM ON TUESDAY, JAN. 13, 2009

What's newsworthy about Miriam Jerris' visit to the First Coast today isn't that she's a female rabbi. It's that she's a rabbi who won't tell you if she believes in God.

"The belief or nonbelief in God is a tricky thing," Jerris said. "There is no evidence to prove or disprove the existence of a personal God."

Jerris is the rabbi of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, a Michigan-based organization with about 30 communities and roughly 10,000 adherents around the world. She's in town for Wednesday night's inaugural meeting of a newly formed group in Jacksonville.

The Times-Union spoke with Jerris by phone prior to her visit.

### **What is humanistic Judaism?**

Humanistic Judaism is an approach to Jewish identity that celebrates Judaism as the cultural and historical experience of the Jewish people. ... Most people would say Judaism is the religion of the Jewish people. We expand that definition to include the cultural and historical experience of the Jewish people.

### **So does that mean you're Jews who don't believe in God?**

It actually doesn't mean that. ... Let's just say that given the lack of evidence, we choose to celebrate what we know. And what we know about is the human condition. What we appreciate and value is our Jewish identity. So we want to participate in the Jewish community. We want to celebrate the Jewish holidays. If we have

some kind of a life event — a death in the family, a marriage — we want to commemorate and celebrate those events in a Jewish context.

### **OK, so you're agnostic Jews?**

I'm going to resist you a little on this. Everybody tries to get to the theology. That really is the least important aspect of what we're about. I'm a humanist. I affirm my belief in the human condition and in the fact that I'm the one responsible for making this world a better place.

### **That ethic of personal responsibility is one you share with Jews who believe in God, isn't it?**

We share many beliefs with other Jews. Humanistic Jews just can't say things they don't have evidence for.

### **So your liturgies, prayers and hymns omit references to God?**

Right.

### **So why not just lose all the religious trappings of Judaism, like using words such as "rabbi," celebrating holidays, etc.?**

Because they enrich your life and part of my answer is because I don't want to. I find it meaningful. I find community of value. I don't want to be told that just because I don't believe in a personal God I can't commune with other Jews and celebrate holidays.

[jeff.brumley@jacksonville.com](mailto:jeff.brumley@jacksonville.com)  
(904) 359-4310

**KOL SHALOM  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
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**Vice President** Mary Raskin

**Secretary** Maureen Sloane

**Treasurer** Stan Sandberg

**Past President** Sharon  
Buckmaster

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**SHJ Board Rep.** Jane  
Goldhamer

**Committee Directors**

**Children's Education**  
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**Membership** Jane Goldhamer

**Programs** Muriel Adler

**Public Relations** Ellen Carlin

**Social Action**

Myra Himmelfarb

**Ritual Director** Jon Dickman

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Larry Kruss

**Newsletter Editor** Jim Prelack

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**Children's Ed Facilitator**  
Marsha Cooper

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**Adult Education Liaison**  
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**Mishpoche** Louise Feldman

**Book Group** Myra Himmelfarb

**CRC Board Rep.**

Martin Heisler

**Yiddish Group** Selma Zack

**Havdallah Potlucks**

Norma Rowe

**Telephone**

Janet Guggenheim

**Teachers** Karen Peterson, Leah  
Parker

**DONATIONS**

**We thank the following members for their generous contributions to Kol Shalom's 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration:**

Roberta and Walter Hellman

**For the Goldhamer Development Fund**

*In Memory of Michael Goldhamer*

From Megan Wright-Hagan and Stephen Hagan of  
Wichita, Kansas

**For the Al Tauber Education Fund**

From Walter and Roberta Hellman

**FEBRUARY LIFE CYCLE EVENTS**

**BIRTHDAYS**

2 Jon Dickman, Ethan Adelman-Sil

9 Zack Moore

21 Ellen Carlin

25 Bob Grossman

27 Stephanie Furman, Natali Plotkin

**ANNIVERSARIES**

9 Janet & Tom Slaten

17 Kirsten & Robert Truman

**YARTZHEITS**

2 Irving Kruss (father of Larry)

6 Maurice Landsman (father of Helen Richardson)

7 Beverly Amstadter (mother of Judy Romano)

16 Mark Gurevitch

22 Elizabeth Hughes (mother of Janet Slaten)

Ruth Rudzinski (grandmother of Tony Jordan)

**Newsletter deadline: the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.**

Submissions from members are most welcome and encouraged!  
Jim Prelack... Newsletter Editor E-mail address: ejprel@yahoo.com

We will mail three free issues of our monthly newsletter to non-members who may continue to receive the newsletter for an annual subscription of \$22.00.

For members, the newsletter is included in the membership dues.  
**If you would like information about membership, please call  
503-459-4210 for a prospective member packet.**

**Kol Shalom website: [www.kolshalom.org](http://www.kolshalom.org)  
Office phone: 503-459-4210**