

Committee Roundup

Outreach

Passover in the Matzah Aisle, 3/2010

Babs Moss

CHOCOLATE COVERED MATZAH? DAYENU!

Way back in January, Miriam Jerris forwarded an email invitation to participate in a webinar that would be about reaching out to unengaged Jews in our communities. Not knowing what a webinar was, my interest was peaked.

It turns out that the webinar was about a program run by the Jewish Outreach Institute which would find Jews where we live: in the grocery store! The program, called Passover in the Matzah Aisle is intended to provide support in engaging Jews who were not attending Sunday Schools, Services or other community events in a low keyed way. What better way than over food?

It sounded like fun. Find a grocery store where we could offer food samples and talk about the Jewish Community. The intent of the JOI was more general than finding people for our congregation. In the best of all worlds, we would have brought along other groups to work with us. However, as time was short, we reached an agreement that we would keep the program within Kahal B'raira, but also promote two websites: Interfaith Families and the new JewishBoston.org.

Although it took some doing, we were able to partner with the Whole Foods Market which is very close to the KB home on Cambridge. Other Whole Foods in other cities had historically participated in the program, so we had precedent. The arrangement worked out well for us, as the store planned a day of Passover food tasting to coincide with our event. We set up a table with examples of seder plates, foods, literature, recipes and sign up cards. JOI suggested offering a raffle. This was against Whole Foods policy, but we were able to offer free electronic copies of the Kahal B'raira Haggadah to people who left us with their email addresses. The original JOI idea was to offer a tasting of Haroset (which Whole Foods happened to be selling). However, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for chocolate covered matzah during the webinar. Whole Foods Market provided some for us to offer as samples. It was very popular and a great way to start a conversation about Boston area Judaism

Chocolate & Toffee-covered Matzah Recipe:

5 – 8 sheets of matzah , ½ c. butter or margarine, 1 c. brown sugar, 12 oz. chocolate chips
Cooking spray, 1 c. chopped walnuts (optional)

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees
- Line a jelly roll pan with wax paper or foil and grease with cooking spray. Cover the pan in a single layer of matzah.
- Heat brown sugar and butter for about 3 minutes on the stove until the sugar dissolves and the mixture thickens. Pour the mixture over the matzah in an even layer. Bake for 5 minutes or until it bubbles.
- Pour chocolate chips over the mixture and wait 1 to 2 minutes until they melt. Spread them evenly over the matzah. Let the matzah cool and then peel it off the foil and break into large pieces.

Program Committee

“INESCAPABLE MUTUALITY”: A Review by Ruth Segaloff

Dateline, January 17, 2010, @ Kahal Braira: A stranger off the street today might have mistaken this production of “Inescapable Mutuality” for a play off Broadway rather than a staged reading at K.B., such was the quality of the play and the performances. (The playwright, Merrill Meadow, is a member of our congregation.)

This second only performance in honor of Martin Luther King Day takes as its title, a phrase from Dr. King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, written in April 1963: “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.” It is what has happened to change this storied alliance between Jews and African Americans that is the focus of this drama.

In 1954, I was a fourth grader in New Orleans, at the infancy of the civil rights movement. I remember the segregated buses that made African Americans give up their seats and move to the back of the bus when a white person wanted their seat; the segregated bathrooms and water fountains unavailable to Elizabeth, truly our second mother; and the segregated lunch counters in department stores and dime stores.

As the child of liberal Northern Jewish parents, our values and views on human rights put us in conflict with the deep South. It was a very traumatic and lonely time for me. This changed when, as a teenager, I became a member of SOFTY, the Southern Foundation of Temple Youth, where we openly debated social values and civil rights as well as the very issue of God’s existence.

Not since 1962, when I graduated from high school, have I ever again felt at home with Judaism. That is, until I discovered Kahal Braira; and this performance of “Inescapable Mutuality” epitomizes why I joined. It certainly deserves a wider audience and I have just the place in mind: The Underground Railroad Theater in Central Square.

Social Action

MLK Day of Service, 2010

Babs Moss

I enjoyed having the opportunity to participate in the Boston City Mission Society’s (CMS) Martin Luther King Day of Service and Learning. After a brief opening meeting and service at the United Parish in Brookline, KB’ers Miriam Rubin, Jane Eisenstark, Jon Levine, myself and our CMS coordinator Adwoa, were off on the T to the Boston Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter, where poor communication had led to their not expecting us! We met in the soup kitchen where the smell of garlic bread, and the sight of lovely pastries donated from the local bakery was heartening in a very dismal looking place. Adwoa gave us a quiz (oy, I flunked!) and then educated us on the plight of the homeless in Massachusetts.

We next were taken to a convent in Roxbury where the “We’re all In This Together” (WAITT) House program was located. WAITT provides residents of Roxbury and North Dorchester adult education including basic academic skills, career search, counseling and support services. Other City Mission volunteers there were busy painting one of the rooms, while we worked on sorting and organizing the school books. We had the pleasure of meeting the director who gave us an introduction to the program, provided copies of “Cultural Cooking” with recipes put together by

the students, and gave us a very interesting algebra lesson stressing an alternative teaching method that makes algebra simple when you notice that it's really all around us!

At the end of the day we met back at the United Parish in Brookline for a closing ceremony.



Christmas Volunteer Project

Christmas Day, 2009

First Church in Cambridge runs a men's homeless shelter out of the basement of its church in Harvard Square. Last month, for the second year, Kahal B'raira provided volunteers to help prepare and serve meals to the guests of the shelter at Christmas time. Ellen Richstone, David Kwiatkowski, and their children Erica and Edward, along with returner Bambi Good volunteered at the shelter on Christmas Eve, and a crew of five arrived very early on Christmas morning to make the breakfast and brew the coffee (although the coffee maker was on the fritz and Jerry Rubin faced the challenge of finding an establishment that was "open" on Christmas morning!) Mim Plavin, Susan Magosi, Wendy Grus, Jerry and daughter Miriam Rubin were bright-eyed, jovial, and made a fantastic morning team. (By the way, Jerry DID find an obscure coffee shop with initials D.D. and was able to import boxes of joe for the shelter guests to awaken to.) Later that day, the third team of KBers arrived and served the Christmas night dinner, as well as prepared soup and vegetables for the next day's meals. The Pred-Sosa family of Lisa, Juan, Rebecca, and Emma were joined by Debbie Siegel that evening to help out, as well as learn about the work of the staff, the history, and the daily running of the shelter and get a tour of the facility

Huge thanks to all the volunteers!!! The Social Action Committee of KB plans on continuing this new (now two-year) tradition of volunteering at First Church Shelter next Christmas 2010 and encourages anyone interested to keep it in mind. Questions can be directed to Debbie Siegel (dsiegel@thayer.org) or Susan Magosci (smago@comcast.net).

What KB's All About

December, 2009

“What KB's All About” by Jane Eisenstark David Spierings is the teacher in our Sunday school's seventh grade. Two recent classes focused on the theme of “Responsibility” which fits in nicely with the Society for Humanistic Judaism's Community Service month and a Mitzvah Project of collecting donations for nearby homeless families. The seventh grade invited the coordinator of donations to speak them about a nearby hotel in Arlington that houses as many as 70 homeless families. The coordinator and the students talked together about homelessness, including - what it must be like to live in a motel for months (not at all like going on vacation!), what kinds of things are needed on a daily basis, and what the students would find it hard to live without. The seventh graders paired up to visit classrooms of younger students and teach them about homelessness. These elder students laughed as they worked together and they encouraged and enjoyed the participation of the younger students. On November 8, KB folks brought in items to donate, and the seventh grade helped sort the donations. David was surprised and impressed to see how seriously the seventh grade students took their teaching responsibility, and the leadership they demonstrated, but then again, he added, “This is what KB's all about.”



Music Committee

Singing Workshop, December 19, 2009

Twenty KB members gathered for a singing workshop led by our music director, Becky Wexler. The workshop was advertised as a chance learn to sing blessings to KB melodies and learn other standards from the KB repertoire. Just as important, it was promised that even those of us who don't dare sing outside of the shower could join in and learn and build confidence. The workshop was all of this and more. We sang and learned for 2 hours. Those who didn't read music learned the basics so that they could use sheet music when tackling a new song. Music committee members came to learn and also ended up sharing what they knew. Becky was patient, encouraging and a great teacher. We ended the session with a Havdallah service and then enjoyed a great potluck dinner. The food seemed to taste extra good after our hard work. We hope to offer the singing workshop again in the spring or fall.