

Annual Reports of Vassar Temple Committees: May 2010

Ritual Committee – Ron Rosen

The Vassar Temple Ritual Committee has met seven times so far this program year, and plans to hold two more meetings for a total of nine meetings. Average attendance for the seven meetings to date has been approximately ten people (current membership list is attached; “inactive” members are not attending regularly, but wish to keep informed of committee activities via minutes and agenda e-mailings). We meet every 4-6 weeks depending on the frequency of upcoming events and issues under discussion. Ron Rosen took over as chair of the committee at the start of this program year, and previous chair Doi Cohen has served admirably as Committee Secretary during this year as well. The High Holy Day Committee operates as a self-contained subcommittee and its chair is an Ex Officio member of this committee; similarly, the (co-)Chair of the Music Committee normally attends Ritual Committee meetings to insure close coordination.

The Goals of the Ritual Committee are:

- (1) To make decisions, in consultation with the rabbi, about matters related to worship services and religious practices;
- (2) To develop programs to encourage expanded participation in worship services by all segments of the congregation.
- (3) To nominate and choose the recipient of the Arnold Award each year (for contributions to the religious life of the congregation), and to arrange for its presentation at the Selichot observation prior to the High Holy Days.
- (4) To arrange for the setup and leadership of lay-led summer services.
- (5) To coordinate with other committees involved in the religious life of the congregation, especially the Music and High Holy Day Committees, but (as appropriate) including other committees including Religious School, Publicity, and Adult Education.

In pursuit of these goals, the Committee has completed the following (and other) activities:

- (1) Coordination of High Holy Day services, particularly arrangements for the Selichot and Tashlich programs.
- (2) Arranged for six summer service leaders for 2009, trained 9 leaders on April 11 for summer 2010 (and beyond), with another training scheduled for May 2, and have already scheduled 3 of 6 leaders for Summer 2010.
- (3) Arranged for three Saturday morning Shabbat programs on October 31, January 9, and March 13, including a Torah Service and Kiddush Luncheons at each, additional programming at the first two, and a guest speaker (Prof. Sid Plotkin) at the third. While attendance was not spectacular, the program is promising enough that we plan to continue the concept for the next program year.
- (4) Arranged for guest speakers (Cathy Bokor and Tamara Gruszko) at two Friday night services on the topic “Growing up Jewish in another country;” also, arranged for Friday night Torah services on those evenings that Joe and Elisa were present and a Bar or Bat Mitzvah was not scheduled for the following morning.
- (5) Arranged for expanded programs in celebration of Chanukah and Purim, including dinners at each.
- (6) Worked with Temple Beth-El to organize the Joint Shabbaton on March 5&6, including hosting the Friday night service and assisting with the Luncheon at Beth-El on Saturday.
- (7) Assist with the hosting of the Dutchess County Interfaith Council annual meeting and community Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on November 22nd, including a dinner and an Oneg/Reception.

- (8) Assist with the Eternal Torah project, including providing staffing for the initial Torah Repair session at Collegeview Towers on April 8th.

In terms of continuing or improving efforts to meet our goals, we present the following suggestions:

- (1) Involve Temple youth and the youth group in more programs, and make sure parents are informed well in advance to secure their cooperation.
- (2) Analyze the Service Diaries provided by the Board members this year in order to identify opportunities to improve services and allied programming, and specifically to encourage greater attendance.
- (3) Identify additional Committee members representing younger families in order to develop programming attractive to that segment of our membership.

Continue restructuring our meetings in order to deal with the most significant agenda items early in the meeting, and strive to keep meetings shorter.

Summary of Participants: Benjamin Krevolin, Bonnie Scheer, Doi Cohen, Jane LaLone, Jeff Brenner, Jen Dahnert, Judy Rosenfeld, Linda Cantor, Lisa Rubenstein, Marian Schwartz, Matt Lampell, Melissa Wall, Perla Kaufman, Rabbi Golomb, Ron Rosen, Sandra Mamis, Seth Erlebacher

Publicity Committee – Doi Cohen, Marian Schwartz

The Publicity Committee, headed by Marian Schwartz and Doi Cohen, works with the Public Relations Caucus, headed by Bob Abrams. The Caucus includes

- Marianne Abrams, publisher of the bulletin, who also maintains the photo gallery featured on the temple web site. She developed a new format for the bulletin, first seen in the April 2010 issue, which allows the web-site version of the bulletin to make better use of color for formatting.
- Perla Kaufman, who sends out regular and special emails to the congregation, including notices of the subject of the Rabbi's sermon for the upcoming Shabbat service Marian Schwartz, who writes the monthly Congregational Notes from Vassar Temple and articles about social action for the Voice, as well as articles for the bulletin and the community papers, and is in charge of our paid ads; she also submits aural bimah announcements for Friday evenings
- Doi Cohen, who writes articles for the bulletin, the Voice and community papers; designs the Mid-month Reminder and occasional flyers; edits the bulletin; submits weekly notices to the Poughkeepsie Journal; compiles the monthly email Announcements which Richard Lowry formats and sends out via Mail Chimp; emails Sandi Rugar each week with the updates for the Friday night handout; and keeps the calendar and Announcements on our website up to date
- Richard Lowry, our webmaster, who, having designed and built a website for our congregation, keeps it up to date and continually enhances its design and content; he also uses Mail Chimp to format and send emails to the congregation, especially the Mid-month Reminder and Announcements at the beginning of each month, with links to the website
- Bob Abrams, who has worked on bulletin production for many years, now chairs the PR Caucus as the liaison from the Executive Committee, and
- Rich Kleban, who shares his marketing expertise and secured broad community publicity for the Eternal Torah project; set up a Facebook account for Vassar Temple, as well as a Twitter account, to direct people to our web site and publicize special events

Susan Hecht is an excellent researcher and writer of articles. Perla and Doi, as well as Sandra Mamis, Seth Erlebacher and others, take photos at temple events which are submitted to appropriate media, including our website.

The timing and content of paid ads are decided by Marian and Perla, as the chair of the Membership Comte., with some input from Doi, who works with the Voice on the holiday greetings.

In July 2009 Doi and Perla rewrote the tri-fold brochure about Vassar Temple and distributed it to libraries, the JCC, etc. They also redid most of the text and photos in the Membership packet which is given to prospective members. Both of these items were printed by Signal Graphics in Wappingers Falls.

Since August 2009, the mid-monthly mailing to the congregation includes very few flyers. Instead there is a one-page Mid-month Reminder which seems to be a popular change.

Also in August, Sandra Mamis, Nan Genshaft and Perla Kaufman completely redesigned the handout for the Friday night services and developed new content for it – another change which seems to be popular.

Many members of the congregation now receive the monthly bulletin only online through a link to the bulletin on our website, www.vassartemple.org, thanks to Richard.

At its March meeting, the temple board approved a publicity policy which had been developed by the committee. The policy is included as an appendix to this report.

Beginning in January, several members of the Publicity Caucus became key members of the Marketing/Publicity Sub-committee for our congregation's 6-month Torah restoration project, Eternal Torah: Restoring Vassar Temple's Scrolls. In this role, we wrote, designed and produced many marketing and publicity pieces, including a sticker with the logo Marianne, together with Sandra Mamis, had designed for the project, a glossy color postcard to introduce the project, a large and prominent spread in the Poughkeepsie Journal arranged by Rich Kleban, a trifold color brochure, an extensive article in the Voice written by Susan Hecht, a certificate for those who helped the scribe, and a banner for our front lawn.

The Publicity Caucus plans to continue to integrate the web site into regular temple publicity and find additional ways to improve marketing and publicity, such as via improved use of Facebook and other techniques.

TV/radio advertising: Benjamin Krevolin provided us with contacts for free radio coverage and public service announcements. Marian connected with Christine Conte of Time Warner Cable in Poughkeepsie, as Christine was interested in covering certain types of events at non-profits. Christine might later have been laid off, but in any case the cable company is required to provide a certain amount of free coverage of local human interest and educational events.

Paid advertising done by Publicity Committee: Due to the demise of the Taconic Press Newspapers, we tried advertising in some new/different newspapers. Marian also priced the Hudson Valley Parent magazine which seemed like a good medium for our new membership ad, and the cost sounded surprisingly reasonable, but it was too late to make their deadline. At this time there does not seem to be any good, affordable opportunity for advertising on the Poughkeepsie Journal web site. We placed the following paid ads during the last year:

1. Membership ads (Marian, in conjunction with Perla of the Membership Committee)-funded under Publicity budget line (\$1200): This year we more prominently directed readers to go to our newly revamped website for further info about the Temple, and the website includes new information specifically for

prospective members. From reader response, we feel the enhancements to the website were very helpful to prospective members.

Ads run: Aug. & Sept. Voice (would have liked to run in July and Aug instead); used smaller size this year – called 3 columns x 5" – to save money, and the new size was fine. Poughkeepsie Journal Enjoy ads plus one special promo ad (late July thru Sept.), New Paltz Times (nearby Ulster County--on recommendation of Shelley Turk, but no measurable response was received), and Southern/ Northern Dutchess News/Beacon Free Press (used slightly larger size this year since the size of their page is larger). We were able to run more ads than last year for the same budget because we got some good deals financially, as, in general, the papers seemed more anxious for our business. We also got an additional discount from the Voice due to a typo they made. Marian suggests starting to advertise earlier (early July).

2. Taste of Judaism Course (Marian, in conjunction with Perla of the Membership Committee)-funded by a URJ grant: We were required to advertise at least 3 times in three major local newspapers. Poughkeepsie Journal (3x Sunday & 1 Enjoy), 3 weeks; Southern Dutchess News/Northern Dutchess News/Beacon Free Press, 3 weeks; "Weekend" supplement to Hudson Valley News; New Paltz Times (Highland/Marlboro/NewPaltz edition). We had excellent responses, especially from the ads in the Poughkeepsie Journal, at least for this type of event. Perhaps we should go back to running some of our regular annual membership advertising in the Sunday edition (rather than just in the Enjoy section on Fridays) despite the extra cost.

3. Voice Congregational Greetings (Doi)-funded by Sisterhood this year due to tight finances of the temple. These are published at the times of the High Holy Days, Hanukkah and Passover at a cost of slightly under \$100 each time.

Summary of Participants: Doi Cohen, Marian Schwartz, Marianne Abrams, Perla Kaufman, Richard Lowry, Susan Hecht, Sandra Mamis, Rich Kleban, Seth Erlebacher, Nan Genshaft, Ben Krevolin

APPENDIX: Publicity Policy, approved by the Board, March 2010

Vassar Temple should publicize activities of our congregation and some activities of groups with which the Temple has an ongoing relationship. Examples of such groups include but are not limited to:

- Dutchess County Community Hebrew School
- Jewish War Veterans
- Jewish Community Center of Dutchess County
- Dutchess County Interfaith Council
- Union for Reform Judaism
- ARZA
- Jewish Federation of Dutchess County

The activities of these groups which should be publicized are those which are likely to interest many members of the Temple. Fund raising projects for the sole benefit of other organizations should not be publicized by Vassar Temple.

Temple members who wish to promote other events or organizations should be encouraged to use the Vassar Temple Facebook fan page for this purpose so that the publicity clearly comes from the individual, not from the Temple.

Community achievements involving Temple members and their families will be publicized at the discretion of the Publicity Committee in consultation with the Executive Committee.

The Temple reserves the right to prioritize or not publicize some items based on topic importance, congregational involvement and space available.

Social Action – Marian Schwartz

The Social Action Committee organizes and/or participates in social justice programs in the local community, as well as undertaking projects and activities related to issues of national and international humanitarian significance. We are also here to help facilitate, support and promote social action projects of the Youth Group, Religious School, Sisterhood and Men's Club.

Mostly our function is "doing" rather than "meeting". Our project leaders work fairly autonomously. Biggest challenge is recruiting more people to take on leadership roles, especially with CROP-Walk, Reform Jewish Voice of NYS, LunchBox planning, to initiate new projects, to co-chair. We invite new ideas for projects, and new members to join us in bringing those plans into fruition.

Ongoing Projects & Key people: LunchBox (Mary Solomon, Jenny Krevolin), evening meal and collecting supplies for Hillcrest Overnite Shelter (Judy Harkavy), Can Jam (Samson family, Ralph Schwartz), the Survivor Project (Perla Kaufman, Gayle Margolin), Audrey Morgenstern Knitting Group (Elaine Bard). Newest activity, Talking Books (Susan Hecht), has involved congregants of all genders and generations, resulting in 24 children's books & recordings of them in English or Spanish for Vassar Brothers Medical Center pediatric ward. Environmental issues-Energy audit of the building was completed (Paul Ciminello & Ron Rosen). Liaison with the Reform Jewish Voice of NYS, inform our membership about URJ social action initiatives, provide material for Tirdof Tzedek (regional social action e-newsletter) & sponsored oneg shabbats. Administer the Temple tzedakah box & always seek new worthwhile beneficiaries.

Annual Projects: Hot Dog Social displays, Purim Pasta, Virtual Souper Sale, and "Get Out the Vote." New this year: Thanksgiving food baskets for Hudson River Housing. .

Community Projects: CROPWalk Against Hunger & other Dutchess County Interfaith Council activities. Mitzvah Day.

Finances-We have been trying not to draw on the Temple budget. Money donated to the Vassar Temple Community Tzedakah Fund pays for LunchBox shopping. The Groten Fund is available for large projects. Committee members also generously paid for supplies out of their own pockets.

Torah Restoration Project – Eternal Torah – Lou Louis

This ad hoc committee was formed in February of 2009 as a result of a meeting with Sandra Mamis. The goal of this six-month project, concluding in September, is to raise funds for restoration of the Temple's torah scrolls that are badly in need of repair, to provide a spiritual journey for the congregation and to raise consciousness in our community about the centrality of Torah in Judaism. We located and entered into a written contract with Sofer-on-site (the Druin family of Sofers) to perform the work and, with the guidance of the Sofers, formed a large committee of temple members to address and develop individual events, publicity, marketing, education, fund raising and ritual aspects. We have had at least twelve meetings of that committee and about 20 committee members. Four major events are planned – some of which will have occurred at the time of the publication of this report: "The Art of the Sofer" at Vassar College on April 8th was funded in part by a \$1,000 grant from the Dutchess County Arts Council, due to the efforts of Sue Lesser and Ben Krevolin. On April 18th there will be a full day of education, ceremony and letter-writing with the Religious School interacting with the Sofer and a speech by the Sofer at the Temple, and visiting Cantor Beth Schafer teaching and performing a short concert. Marge Groten and her sub-committee have done a wonderful job organizing

that event and Sandra Mamis has been in charge of scheduling letter writing opportunities for Temple members. A decision was made early on that there would be no charges associated with attendance at the various events or letter writing opportunities.

The next scheduled event will be on September 12, 2010 at which time the Hon. Albert R. Rosenblatt, a retired Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, will speak on the subject "The Influence of Torah on Modern Jurisprudence." We expect that the talk will be of wide interest to the legal community as well as the congregation. That event is being co-chaired by Lou Lewis and Fritz Goodman. Finally, closing ceremonies will be held on September 26th, 2010 and the details for that day are being developed by the Project Committee. A march through Poughkeepsie with the repaired Torahs, accompanied by a Klezmer band is one consideration.

To date, due in large part to generous contributions by members of the congregation and a number of foundations, almost \$100,000 has been raised for this project. Of special note are leadership donations by Linda and Steven Lant, the Turk Family, Charles and Joan Blanksteen, the McCann Foundation, the Frances Davis Fund, and the Schlossberg Fund. Brian Silverman has acted as Treasurer for this effort – scrupulously tracking donations and expenses. The marketing and publicity committee, under the leadership of Bob and Marianne Abrams and Richard Kleban, have generated wonderful designs for invitations, brochures, a banner for in front of the Temple, and a marvelous article about the Project on the front page of the Poughkeepsie Journal.

In addition to paying the contracted costs of the Sofer's for restoration and guidance through this celebratory and educational and letter writing process, a \$20,000 fund will be established, per the direction of the Temple Board, for the maintenance of the Torah Scrolls going forward. Any balance over those amounts will be used to restore funds that have been loaned by other permanent funds for general operating expenses. The Temple members who have worked on this Project are:

Summary of participants: Lew Lewis, Jo Anne Abraskin, Linda Babas, Jeff Brenner, Susan Hecht, Marilyn Lampell, Bonnie Scheer, Lisa Sue Quankenbush, Nadine Zaritsky, Marianne Abrams, Jen Dahnert, Ed Garber, Marge Groten, David Lampell, Marsha Lowry, Sandra Mamis, Sandor Margolin, Elaine Lipschutz, Melissa Wall, Dave Wolf, Doi Cohen, Seth Erlebacher, Ron Rosen, Linda Cantor, Herb Stoller.

Men's Club - Bob Abrams

The Men's Club had a busy season this year, having completed or sponsored the following events:

- Men's Club Shabbat
- Purim Dinner
- Oneg for Sisterhood Shabbat
- Erected new Eternal Torah banner in front of the Temple
- Sponsored several walks on the Walkway Over the Hudson
- Co-sponsored Religious School parent's breakfast
- Game night
- Lunchbox
- Built the Sukkah
- Bike Ride on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail

In the future, we will look for more ways for the men of Vassar Temple to socialize, network and have fun while volunteering available time and effort to help the Temple in whatever way we can.

Summary of Participants: Bob Abrams, Dave Lampell, Alan Kaflowitz, Joel Zaritsky, Chuck Stein, Seth Erlebacher, Kurt Quackenbush, Brian Silverman, Ron Rosen, Jeff Brenner, David Smith, Joel Kelson, Howard Susser, Brian Silverman, Maurice Collen, David Wolf, David Hecht, David Posner, Sam Finnerman, Howard Brown, Paul Ciminello, Bob Creedon, Ed Garber

Music Committee – Bonnie Scheer

The Music Committee accomplished the following:

- Planned the Music for the High Holy days
- Planned the Music for the Eternal Torah Restoration Project Opening Ceremony
- Helped augment the cost of the CD featuring Vassar Temple Shabbat Music. The CD project was funded by Eleanor Pupko

Our goal for next year is to have Elisa sing at more Friday night services. It has been a consistent theme that people appreciate the Music and find it greatly enhances the Services. Where we can, we need to increase the Music Budget.

Summary of Participants: Margery Groten, Bonnie Scheer and Gayle Margolin

Personnel – Marsha Lowry

This year we have hired Laura Mercado to work as our Host/Hostess. She has been an excellent addition to our staff.

Next year, the committee should be writing guidelines for future office and custodial personnel. The job description has been written. The possibility of splitting the office job into two parts: financial and office management should be considered.

Summary of Participants: Marsha Lowry, Cathy Bokor

Use of Facilities – Marsha Lowry

We need to try to find a way that the facilities can be used more. Temple activities have increased this year and, therefore, there has been additional use of our building.

Summary of Participants: Marsha Lowry, Cathy Bokor

Library Committee – Art Groten

The entire 1900-volume adult portion of The Reifler Library has been catalogued online. My thanks go to committee members Susan Budson and Hilary Wrobel as well as to Elaine Lipschutz, Doi Cohen and Emily Brundage for their efforts in completing the task. The children's portion needs to be culled before cataloguing can commence.

All congregants may access the catalogue from their homes or, if they don't have their own computers, in the library at Temple. It is a simple process. You may go to the Temple's web site (<http://www.vassar temple.org>) and use the link at the left. Or, using your favorite web browser, enter the URL address for Library Thing (<http://www.librarything.com/catalog/VTLibrary>). Either method will take you to our listing. There you can search by title, author or keyword to see if we have what you need. You will be able to read the entry but you will not be able to make any changes to it. If you see an error, contact me (artgroten@optonline.net).

We will evaluate our strengths and weaknesses and fill in where needed. Fiscal restraints have limited new additions over the past few years so we have a lot of catching up to do. I remind everyone that the Reifler Library Fund exists for the sole purpose of adding new books to our library. Donations to that Fund are an ideal way to commemorate important milestones such as confirmation or graduation or to remember a loved one. Bookplates identify the donor of each book.

We have a very fine library and I encourage everyone to use it.

Summary of Participants: Art Groten, Susan Budson Fink, Hilary Wrobel, Elaine Lipschutz, Doi Cohen, Emily Brundage.

Nominating Committee – Ed Garber

Thanks to the members of the Nominating Committee, we have a wonderful slate for 2010-2011. The committee members are Seth Erlebacher, Amy Horn-Oclatis, David Lampell, Ron Rosen, (ex-officio, Sandra Mamis) and chairman, Ed Garber.

The Slate:

Officers

- President: Seth Erlebacher
- 1st VP: Bob Abrams
- 2nd VP: David Lampell
- Treasurer: Brian Silverman
- Secretary: Tamara Gruszko
- Immediate Past President: Sandra Mamis

Trustees

- 1 year: Ed Garber
 - 3years: Jeff Brenner, Sam Finnerman, Joel Kelson, Bob Ritter and Lillian Weigert
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Leadership Development Committee – Ed Garber

As was requested last June at our board retreat, Lisa Cohen returned to provide Vassar Temple with a training session on Practical Leadership Development. The committee sponsored the training session featuring Lisa Cohen on January 23 for the Board of Trustees and a few guests. Lisa's topic was Volunteer Development. Thanks to Lisa and to David Lampell for chairing this very successful session in my absence. This completed the Board Development activities for the VT calendar year which ends June 30, 2010.

Committee Members: Melissa Erlebacher, Wendy Giangrasso, David Lampell, Susan Lesser, Sandra Mamis, Ronold Rosen, Edward Garber

Finance Committee – Brian Silverman

Goals for the Year

1. Establish the budget for fiscal year 2010/11.
2. Seek other investment options for increasing income.
3. Evaluate Dues Relief memberships and raise as appropriate.
4. Monitor dues and fee payments during the year.
5. Evaluate SCRIP program and make recommendations for improvements.

Major Accomplishments

1. Managed the budgeting process offering and evaluating various income and expense options in the Finance Committee and then the Board of Trustees for final congregational approval.
2. Transferred the Restricted Funds from Vanguard MMF to Hudson Valley FCU improving the interest rate from .4% to 1.35%. Currently in the process of evaluating the status of the HFBS MMF investment versus a bond fund portfolio.
3. Raised 28 (72% of current list) dues relief members by +8% or more.
4. Continued communications with members via letters, e-mails, phone calls, etc. regarding late or past due membership dues and/or fees (Capital Fund, Religious School, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, pizza, etc.).
5. An evaluation of the SCRIP program lead to a recommendation to continue on a voluntary basis allowing new Chair, Barbara Chernack, to work on increasing participation and profitability.

Recommendations for Committee Improvements

1. More direct member participation.
2. Greater member diversity.
3. More controlled and civil meetings and discussions.

Participants: Brian Silverman – Chairman, Sandra Memis - ex officio, Seth Erlebacher - ex officio, Bob Abrams, Cathy Bokor, Ed Garber, Chuck Kaufman, Perla Kaufman, Linda Lant, Marsha Lowry, Kent Mardon, Ken Scheer
