

Rabbi Paula's Annual Report – May 2025

When one looks out into the world, things do not look great. However, when one looks inward, to our congregation, the picture is full of excitement and unlimited possibilities for the future. It has been another amazing and very busy year at Hebrew Tabernacle. It seems like every week someone new walks through the door to meet us and often, to join our community. We are growing fast in so many ways: among seniors, single adults & couples and younger families. We are growing numerically but we are also growing through more programming and community activities being offered and more people feeling engaged and stepping into leadership roles.

There is something for every age group as we build our community. Tot Shabbat has grown enormously and we welcome new families every month and help them feel a part of our Tot community. Sometimes we have a “service” with singing, puppets, blessings and a story. Several times this year we have had a Shabbat dinner.

Our Religious school continues to grow and flourish. Each grade engages in an age-appropriate curriculum which builds their Jewish identity and knowledge. Family services are a highlight of each month. We sing, dance, pray, enjoy the student presentations and then settle in for a Shabbat dinner which no one wants to leave! Thanks to our teachers and volunteers we have been able to put the students in small groups for Hebrew to optimize Hebrew learning time. A special thanks to Shelly Koy and our fabulous teachers!

Hebrew High meets once a month. We have discussions about current events (everything from abortion to Trans rights) and how we might understand them through a Jewish lens. We are planning a trip next January to the Religious Action Center's L'takein Seminar in Washington, DC. During this incredible weekend, Reform Jewish teens from all over the country gather to learn about important social justice issues and then lobby their members of Congress.

Special holiday events, social gatherings, Mitzvah day, Shabbat and other holiday services, Torah study, the Purim Carnival, Cantor Wolff's beautiful music, adult education, social action and speakers....too many to list. There is always something exciting and engaging at Hebrew Tabernacle. We are so blessed that there are so many people who are dedicated to making us the synagogue that we are. Our leadership, Desma Holcomb, the Board and our Committees, our many volunteers who step up in ways big and small and of course our dedicated staff who work above and beyond. Yes, there are financial challenges (I have never seen a congregation without financial challenges!) but the potential for our community to grow together in the coming years is limitless. We should all be proud of how far we have come and we should continue to be excited about the future!

Ritual Committee Report – May 2025

By Rabbi Paula

It has been a very busy year for ritual at HT. High Holidays were very well attended. We had our regular adult services led by Rabbi Feldstein and Cantor Wolff. We also had Tot services and Family services and a wonderful lunch on Rosh Hashanah afternoon. For the first time we threw open the doors for newcomers and we weren't disappointed. Many new people came to all of the High Holiday services and many of them stayed as part of our congregation.

We were overwhelmed with the crowd who came to decorate the Sukkah, and who came to dance with the Torah. We heard from a survivor on Kristallnacht. Since Hanukkah fell during the school vacation we had a pre-Hanukkah celebration in addition to our beautiful Shabbat Hanukkah service when the sanctuary is lit up with everyone's Menorahs.

Our Purim "unservice" and shpiel as well as the Purim Carnival brought joy and celebration to everyone. The congregational Passover seder was a huge success with singing, participation and great food. Our Yom Hashoah commemoration started with a service and memorial candle lighting led by Rabbi Paula and Cantor Wolff and continued with speakers who shared a very different Holocaust story with us.

Our ritual year will culminate with Shavuot in early June (don't miss the ice cream sundaes). We celebrated 11 B'nai Mitzvah as well as other life cycle events.

Music, prayer, community and of course food have made our ritual year a busy and meaningful one. We look forward to celebrating, commemorating and growing the ritual life of our congregation in the coming year!

Social Action Committee Report – May 2025

Co-Chairs Rita Hamburg & Desma Holcomb; Sec'y Laurie Slodounik

Highlights from 2024-2025

Summer & Fall Social Action Survey at Services & kick-off Meeting set priority campaigns for the year: Support & Protect Immigrants, Support Democracy & Civil Rights, Climate Justice, followed by Reproductive Justice and LGBTQ Rights. Summer included Pride Shabbat, a documentary on Judaism and Reproductive Rights “Under G-d,” and participation in the RAC-NY Climate Justice Campaign to win Climate Superfund Law.

We also responded to members’ interest in learning more about the crisis in Israel and Gaza. Rabbi Paula taught a history of Israel class on Zoom “How did we get here?” Hebrew School parent Amy Feinstein, working with Rabbi Paula, continues to lead a monthly intergenerational discussion group on Israeli and Palestinian Peace and Solidarity.

Election Education & NYS ERA Support in the Fall & a successful Mitzvah Day on Jan. 12

After a NYCLU speaker on the ERA, reproductive and civil rights, members sent postcards at a joint HT/Beth Am party, at Kate Sussman’s and at home for both Reclaiming Our Vote and in support of the NYS Equal Rights Amendment—which passed!

On Mitzvah Day Clothing was collected and distributed and care kits were assembled and sent with Uptown Wagon, the ziti was baked and delivered to the 181st St. fridge, books were sold for Middle East peace, pizza was eaten to support the Hebrew High school trip to D.C. Advocacy letters were written, Climate justice and Immigration reform seminars were attended, and our children created an art heart with loving kindness.

Supporting and Defending Immigrants, in the Winter and Spring

We reactivated our membership in the NYC Synagogue Coalition for the Immigration and Refugee Crisis, which led a workshop on Mitzvah Day. We attended a Forum on How Allies Can Take Action led by Sen. Robert Jackson in Feb. We are taking all that guidance into meeting with the two churches in our building and with local Public School Parent Associations. We want to make our building safer for immigrants and support migrant children who go to school with our Hebrew School students, and their parents. With Beth Am, we will be distributing “know your rights” cards for immigrants to local businesses. We will be educating & advocating for The NY for All Act and NY Access to Representation Act and the Federal Protecting Sensitive Locations Act.

Recurring Acts of Loving Kindness:

Quarterly Blood Drives, Annual Flu shots & Organizing donations to the Fall and Spring Free Stores

This Summer: Keep an eye out for:

- Pride Shabbat Friday, 6/27;
- June Outdoor Mitzvah Day – in parks, planting/trimming our plants, petitioning for Climate bills
- Climate Justice emails & calls to support HEAT Act & the Plastics Packaging Reduction Bill (PRRIA) through Tabernacle & the Reform Religious Action Center/NY Climate Campaign
- More developments in our work to support and defend immigrants.

Please consider joining this dynamic, effective, multi-issue committee!

Hebrew School Parent Committee Report – May 2025

By Matt Scherer, Board Member for the Hebrew School Parent Committee

The Hebrew School Parent Committee is happy to report that the Hebrew School and Hebrew High are thriving and have been happy to welcome several new Hebrew School families to HT this year. The committee continues to meet intermittently with Rabbi Paula over Zoom. Based on prior parent feedback, regular family services have been occurring monthly, followed by dinner/socializing after. These have been well-attended and a highlight of the school year for many of our families. In addition to continuing to grow our enrollment next year, there have been discussions regarding adding an extra Hebrew class on a second day.

The Hebrew High program is also thriving under Rabbi Paula's leadership. Rabbi meets with the teens monthly, and a trip to Washington DC with the Reform movement's Religious Action Committee is being planned for next January.

Please reach out to any of us with any ideas or concerns, or if you would like to join the committee.

Other Committee members include: Robyn Schwartz, Laurie Slodounik, Tracy Bernstein, Sari Nickelsburg, Jesse Gerber, Rebecca Gonzalez, Melissa Moschitto

Tot Committee Report – May 2025

By Cordelia Zukerman, Committee Chair

The Tot community has continued to grow; we have welcomed a couple of new Tot families since December. We advertise Tot Shabbat events on the Washington Heights Parent & Me listserv.

Thirteen families RSVP'd for the Tot Shabbat dinner on March 21; the dinner was lively, with over 20 young kids in attendance. A lot of families seem to know each other from the Y preschool. We are looking forward to our monthly Tot Shabbat services and to dinners every few months.

Membership Committee Report – May 2025

By Gisele Garelik

One of the keys to Hebrew Tabernacle's future success as a community is growth of our membership. This will also strengthen us financially as shared costs—clergy, staff and our building—are supported over a larger base of dues donations.

In December, we had a total of 172 adult members, which included 27 new adults since May—a 10% increase. As of today, we have 192 adult members, across 29 families. This is an 11.6% increase!

Membership increased across all categories: HS Families, Adults and Seniors.

Members of the Membership Committee have come into the office to start to learn the new Shul Cloud database as it relates to members and potential members. Individuals have taken specific assignments to welcome new members, speak with potential new members and gently prod the late membership renewers.

We are grateful for Board member volunteers who bring friends to services and events and who are willing to meet individually with new members and potential members.

Chesed Committee – May 2025

Hilary Zatz, Committee Chair

The Chesed Committee continues to reach out to members and friends of Hebrew Tabernacle. "Chesed" in Hebrew means compassion and lovingkindness. It means reaching out by phone calls, cards and notes, as well as by visits to members and friends of our congregation, including the sick and homebound.

The experiences can range from celebrating a milestone birthday and the joys of the holidays, to sharing in the experience of life-cycle events. There is also the opportunity to work with local programs on behalf of neighbors in need. The Chesed Committee continued to help provide toiletries and warm winter clothing on behalf of a local church.

The Chesed Committee again participated in the vital activities of Mitzvah Day this past January, by fulfilling the purchase of many key components of care kits for the homeless. This was made possible by the generous donations from members of Hebrew Tabernacle and Beth Am -- The People's Temple. Year-round contributions of toiletry items from a generous vendor are enabling us to continue supporting various community programs.

In recent weeks we once again helped to deliver the joy of Purim through boxes of Mishloach Manot treats that were provided by the Hebrew Tabernacle for each congregant family. My thanks to Chesed Committee member Trudi Cohen as well as to Vice President Mike Klein, who assisted me in bringing these wonderful boxes to a number of congregants unable to visit our synagogue building.

If you would like to share in the Chesed experience, or know of someone we should contact, please reach out to me at any time through my email address: pizzatzh@gmail.com

Yad b'Yad: Legacy of the Sisterhood

By Hilary Zatz, Committee President

We look back on this past year with love and gratitude for the ways we joined together on behalf of Hebrew Tabernacle as well as shared in special remembrances.

Last July we mourned the loss of two beloved longtime members, Grace Neidish and Dr. Ruth Westheimer. It was an honor to have known these very special individuals. May their memories be for a blessing.

In the warm-weather months we also joined together with the Women of Reform Judaism, a key nationwide and global social action organization to which each member of Yad b'Yad belongs, to launch a successful voting campaign. This initiative helped make possible the passage of the all-important New York Equal Rights Amendment in November. The campaign, communicated through WRJ's Northeast Division, was held in conjunction with the New York Religious Action Center (RAC-NY).

From August through October, Hebrew Tabernacle's Armin and Estelle Gold Wing Gallery had a wonderful exhibition that featured the beautiful art prints of Rosamond Gumpert Jorgensen, z"l, the beloved mother of retired Yad b'Yad President Diana Douglas. Also on display were several examples of Diana's fine pottery work. Our fundraising auction, with all exhibit pieces generously offered by Diana for bids as a benefit on behalf of Yad b'Yad, ran from September to the end of October. The auction provided much-needed funds for us to continue all the good works we perform on behalf of Hebrew Tabernacle.

For the New Year, Yad b'Yad once again was honored to sponsor a sumptuous kiddush following the first day of Rosh Hashanah services. Over 100 worshippers of all ages enjoyed a wonderful meal and each other's company. Special thanks to Mike Klein for spearheading this event.

During Sukkot, Yad b'Yad again provided the beautiful greenery that graced the bimah of our Sanctuary, a time-honored annual tradition.

Yad b'Yad (Hebrew for "hand in hand"): Legacy of the Sisterhood has been an integral part of congregational life since our synagogue's founding in the early years of the last century. If you would like to be part of the Yad b'Yad experience, to share new ideas and goals for our future, please reach out to me at pizzatzh@gmail.com

Grants Committee – May 2025

By Paul Glassman, Committee Chair

Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

- Non-Profit Security Grant Program
- Check received: \$72,672.50 on June 14, 2024
- Status: final report submitted on July 14, 2024

DCJS, NYS, Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes – Submitted: February 26, 2023

- *Restoring and Hardening Sanctuary Entrance Doors*
- Reimbursable up to \$50,000, match of \$15,000 required (from Homeland Security)
- Status: awarded on July 11, 2023 (contract fully executed on March 5, 2024)
- Quarterly reports: submitted in August 2024
- Reimbursement received: \$50,000 on December 6, 2024

Borough President's Office Cultural Tourism Grant – Submitted: March 8, 2024

- *Gold Wing Gallery: Showcasing Northern Manhattan Visual Artists*
- \$3,000 in support of Gold Wing Gallery
- Status: \$2,000 awarded on July 10, 2024
- Check received: July 29, 2024

Medical Center Neighborhood Fund – Submitted: January 28, 2025

- *Gold Wing Gallery: Showcasing Northern Manhattan Artists*
- \$3,000 in support of Gold Wing Gallery
- Interview on April 9, 2025
- Status: pending; notification in fall 2025

National Fund for Sacred Places – Submitted: March 3, 2025

- *Diagnosis and Repair of Settling Crack in Masonry of Dome Drum*
- \$50,000 with required match of \$50,000
- Status: pending; notification in October 2025

Borough President's Office Manhattan Cultural Tourism Grant – Submitted: March 6, 2025

- *Gold Wing Gallery: Showcasing Northern Manhattan Visual Artists*
- \$3,000 in support of Gold Wing Gallery
- Status: pending; notification in spring 2025

Adamah Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition Grant – Submitted: March 31, 2025

- *Solar Panels on Roof for Building Electricity*
- \$10,000 matching funds
- Status: pending notification

Legacy Planning Committee – May 2025

By Will Craig, Chair

The upcoming year 2025-26 will represent a transition of phases in the work of the Legacy Planning Committee (LPC), from gathering/organizing information & resources to implementation.

The committee has accomplished the following elements from the 04/18/24 Annual Report:

- completed the committee leadership survey process
- digestion of implicated actions from committee leadership survey -> task-planning
- creation of congregational survey
- digital scan of paper-based cemetery records for safe-keeping
- market-analysis to confirm our plot pricing remains accurate to the market (it is)
- created a cemetery workflow for ongoing reference for new & existing account inquiries
- finalized and supported the distribution of the congregational end-of-life planning survey
- committee analysis of the congregational survey producing a few focused recommendations

ONGOING/UPCOMING:

- Drive January 2026 end of life planning event in coordination with Rabbi Paula and the new annually elected leadership.
- Provide clarity and availability of resources to the congregation pertaining to Legacy Planning
- Completion of the transition from paper-based cemetery records onto a revised and easy to maintain digital records system toward standard utilization.
- Update to the members/staff on record to communicate with the Cedar Park - Beth El Cemetery. A site visitation is planned for 4/25/25.

Building Committee Report – May 2025

By Mike Klein, Chair

A structural engineer has been hired to evaluate the current conditions of our building. After a preliminary inspection was conducted, a recommendation was made to hire a contractor to make several building probes. The good news is that the probes show that the building's structure is in sound condition. However, there are a number of facade and roofing issues that need to be addressed. With the assistance of building reps, a plan is being developed to address these issues with a phased approach. By the time you read this report, we should have received bids and be in the process of selecting / working with a contractor addressing the most critical items over the summer.

Although the heating season is over, we continue to work on making the system more efficient. We have managed to get several radiators operating again either by draining, releasing trapped air and or replacing steam traps. The circulation pumps for the boiler's condenser tank have been reconditioned which will also enhance our heating system. Still more work to be done but progress has been made.

Restoration is nearly complete on the most western set of main entry doors on 185th street. Progress photos that have been submitted indicate that the doors will look stunning when complete. We are hoping the doors will be installed by the congregational meeting so you can get a chance to admire them. Speaking of doors, the wooden vestibule door has been repaired facing immediately after the main temporary doors. We are in the process of sanding and applying a durable gloss paint on the Social Hall doors that will make it easier to maintain and continue looking in great condition.

The Social Hall floor as well as the back leading steps have been stripped and waxed, resulting in a huge improvement. We will attempt to maintain it in this condition. As time permits, we will tackle marble and terrazzo floors in other parts of the building.

Renovation is now complete on the ground floor bathroom adjacent to the kitchen and is accessible to all.

Composting is officially in effect at HT. Please assist our custodians with this earth-friendly and mandatory city requirement by disposing your food scraps in the clearly marked brown composting containers.

As summer approaches we will work on the ceiling and walls on the staircase that leads to the main office since there is less traffic in the building. While this project is ongoing you will be directed to a different door to enter the building.

Our hedges that surround our building need serious trimming. This is a huge undertaking and our limited custodian staff can use a big hand on this important project. We'd really appreciate your help. Please reach out at mkleinnyc@rcn to lend a hand.

Fundraising Committee – May 2025

By Aaron Slodounik, Chair

First and foremost, we are very appreciative of our Leadership Circle donors, who have contributed \$5,000 or more in support of our community. This support has been essential in sustaining the synagogue and supporting its growth this past year. We likewise give our thanks to members who have given bequests. These contributions will help ensure that Hebrew Tabernacle remains a presence in Washington Heights for many years to come.

Our major fundraising campaign of the year took place last June for the renovation of the social hall. Thanks to the generosity of our community we were able to raise \$56,284 of our \$70,000 goal. Thanks to the hard work of the social hall renovation committee the cost of the renovation came in at \$48,284. Remaining funds will be applied toward the general operating budget.

Hebrew Tabernacle waived the High Holiday ticket requirement for newcomers for the first time last fall. This policy was a resounding success with increased donations. In addition to receiving \$2,000 more than the previous year, our open-door policy resulted in several new families joining the synagogue. Another fundraising highlight is Rita's exercise class, which brought in \$10,000 this past year & on track to continue next year. Other fundraisers include the Hanukkah Virtual Menorah and the Mishloach Manot campaign. The Mishloach Manot fundraiser resulted in free boxes distributed to every member of our community and \$180 being donated to the West Side Campaign Against Hunger. The Passover campaign raised funds to help subsidize the cost of the community seder and make it more affordable to participants. Two fundraisers were absent from our lineup this year. We discontinued the Honey from the Heart fundraiser and we did not hold a Rummage Sale.

We are mindful of the significant gap between the synagogue's income and operating expenses. We had \$432,000 in income in Fiscal Year 2023-2024, versus the \$562,000 budgeted in expenses for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. At the recent board meeting, Aaron proposed a quarterly meeting of members from the licensing, membership, finance, and fundraising committees to tackle this problem. We are beginning to think about fundraising for the next fiscal year and need your help. If you are interested in joining our committee or organizing a fundraiser, please reach out to me at aslodounik@gradcenter.cuny.edu.

Licensing Committee Report

Andrew DaSilva

The themes of HT's licensing activities this past year are **stability** and **steady growth**. **Stability** has come from the continued use of our building on Sundays by our friends at Uptown Community Church and Rise to Inspire Ministries.

Also, Pied Piper Children's Theater has continued to use our building for its rehearsals and performances. Aside from bringing our Washington Heights neighbors into the building, the performances are fun!

Growth has come from a multitude of sources, including:

- ◇ Heights Meditation & Yoga
- ◇ A children's chess program
- ◇ Gotham Kids Muzosa martial arts
- ◇ ABC Music
- ◇ Muscota babysitting
- ◇ B'nei Mitzvah and other parties

In addition to bringing much needed income, these groups, as well as HT-sponsored activities (such as Rita's exercise classes, blood drives, and art installations), have made HT a vibrant hub for the Washington Heights community.

We look forward to another year of steady, continued growth. Currently, we are speaking with a church looking to hold weekday services in our building, as well as a non-profit organization.