



THE ILLUMINATOR

Or Emet – The Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

Winter/Spring 2026 Issue
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For You Were Strangers: Living Our Humanistic Values

by Rabbi Eva R. Cohen

As this issue goes to press, the Trump administration is launching “[an intensive immigration enforcement operation](#)” targeting the Twin Cities’ Somali community — following on Trump’s [xenophobic attacks](#). Along with Minnesota’s [wider Jewish community](#), Or Emet condemns this targeting and these attacks. We draw on Jewish tradition, including the Torah’s repeated commands to care for “the stranger.” These commands are linked to historical memory, “You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 22:20) We also respond as *Humanistic Jews*, grounding our solidarity in Jewish experiences of displacement, dehumanization, and scapegoating. As Rabbi Sherwin Wine expressed, “[C]ompassion for the suffering of others flows from the intense suffering of the Jewish people ... The logic of our history morally forbade us to inflict on innocent victims what we personally have endured.” (Wine, *Judaism Beyond God*, 224)

Jewish tradition (Leviticus 19:18) and humanistic principles also mandate care for our neighbors. [More than a hundred thousand people of Somali descent](#) call Minnesota home. Living in Minneapolis’ Seward neighborhood, many families on my block are Somali. So are many of my daughter’s friendly kindergarten classmates, the teacher’s aide in her classroom, the gracious, knowledgeable staff member who gave us a [Somali Museum](#) tour this spring, and my congresswoman [Rep. Ilhan Omar](#). Each of these people is an essential part of Minnesota’s fabric.



It’s worth noting, too, that [~95% of Somali Minnesotans are U.S. citizens](#). Among the rest, many have green cards, and those with pending asylum or Temporary Protected Status applications already communicate with immigration officials. More “immigration enforcement” isn’t needed; it’s cynically stoking xenophobia and sowing fear. Our neighbors, whom we love, need our support.

As feminist author, bell hooks, reminds us [love is a verb](#). How can we take action?

- 1) Plug into neighborhood, community, and school groups to participate in solidarity actions close to home. Attend a rapid response training through one of these groups or immigrant rights organizations like [Monarca](#) or [MIRAC](#).
- 2) Follow organizations like [Indivisible Twin Cities](#) to learn about protests you can attend and actions you can take — get alerts through Jewish Community Action’s [Action Havurah](#) and the Democracy Defense Table’s text line (text PLEDGE to 30319). I participated in the “[Airport Day of Action for Immigrant and Worker Justice](#)” (news coverage [here](#)) after getting text alerts.
- 3) Support Somali Uber/Lyft drivers by [asking the Metropolitan Airport Commission](#) to provide an indoor waiting area with restrooms for drivers.
- 4) Give donations and volunteer with organizations that stand up for Somali Minnesotans, other immigrants and refugees. Organizations, including [ICOM](#), the [Advocates for Human Rights](#), [HIAS](#), and [CAIR-MN](#), have spoken at Or Emet.

Minnesota [menschlichkeit](#) means helping #MeltICE!



OR EMET
MINNESOTA CONGREGATION
FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

The Illuminator

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President's Message

by Jeff Pipes

Winter finally arrived after the most beautiful fall ever. The lights of Hanukkah brighten the dark nights and our spirits. Since winter 2024, our political situation is even darker. ICE has arrived in Minnesota and our leader has insulted us with racist rants. I wish I had a better report. As a Humanistic Jewish congregation, we have a lot of work ahead to protect our community, both at Or Emet and beyond.

Or Emet members showed up in force to the "No Kings" rally again this fall for a successful demonstration of resistance. We continue our Loaves & Fishes volunteering as a way to support less fortunate folks; please consider joining us in providing meals, or make a donation. We also continue to support Listening House, the Hallie Q. Brown Center and Neighborhood House.

We started our Shabbat program year with a presentation by Professor David Schultz about "American Democracy in the Age of Trump." Then, for the Sunday program, we had actor-singer Ryan London Levin, who spoke about his playwright debut with the production of "American Golem: The Kid Cann Story." It inspired another large group of us to attend a reading of his play. During the Sunday program "The Secret Lives of Or Emeters" we found out that Paul Simon practiced in one member's basement, another rescued a sloth in the Amazon, and that we are rife with musicians and artists! Thank you, Sarah, for organizing our first lively and fun Yiddish Shabbos. This should be an annual event!

We had High Holiday services at First Unitarian Society where Rabbi Eva gave us truly thoughtful and inspiring sermons, our members and JCSS students sang, and we had incredible commentaries from several members. I continue to be floored by the intellect and talent within our membership. The space itself was beautiful. We will be polling the membership about the location of future events and holidays.

Or Emet's Hanukkah party was held at First Unitarian Society (FUS) on December 14. We lit up the night, ate latkes and sufganiyot and lost all of our gelt to a few gambling sharks. Really, it was a fun time for friendship and community.

Speaking of the future, this winter and spring, we will continue to host great programs and a few special ones — a new/prospective member welcome brunch, a special presentation on estate planning, and begin a more long-term strategic planning review to think about the future of Or Emet. I hope you will all be involved in improving and sustaining our unique congregation and school. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication.

Our Jewish Cultural Sunday School continues to thrive. We sadly said goodbye to teachers Sam and Colleen. Fortunately, three of our older post-B Mitzvah students stepped up to teach with great enthusiasm.

Finally, watch for our new and improved Or Emet website coming very soon!

Or Emet thrives solely on the generosity of member dues and donations.

Wishing you peace and light as we close out the year together.

Welcome!

*New Members
and Families*

Tia Lauve
Heather Randall and family

2025 High Holidays



High Holiday Recap by Lydia Fess, Committee Chair

The High Holidays Planning Committee would like to thank everyone who attended and made this year's services possible! We would also like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to our High Holidays survey. Your feedback is invaluable to ensuring future festivities meet the needs of our membership.



This was our first year hosting the High Holidays at the First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis. First Unitarian Society was a gracious host, providing ample assistance across all three services in addition to a beautiful and functional space. We have heard from members that parking was the primary concern with this location, and we will take this into close consideration. We also heard that attendees appreciated the physical space, the sound system, and the integration with our hybrid program. Above all, attendees shared that they appreciated the thoughtful commentaries from Rabbi Eva and our members, as well as the moving music throughout. We look forward to planning the 2026 services, and to once again bringing in a new year together!

Tashlich



Or Emet has long observed Rosh Hashanah Tashlich with a lakeside gathering and service. This provides an opportunity to symbolically cast away negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors so we can identify positive changes and move forward into the new year.

Or Emet's 2025 High Holiday Tashlich was observed on September 23. Rabbi Eva Cohen led a service at Lebanon Hills Holland Lake which was followed by a potluck lunch at Alan and Sharon Miller's home. The Millers deserve huge appreciation for their enduring hospitality!



REVERSE TASHLICH: Repair the Sea, Lake, and/or River | Tikkun HaYam Environmental Cleanup — A New Twist on the Tradition — An Or Emet and Global Movement

Unfortunately, the 2025 Reverse Tashlich cleanup was cancelled. We're looking forward to resuming these valued events.

High Holiday Member Commentaries

The following presentations by Or Emet members were featured at Or Emet's 2025 High Holiday services. These original commentaries offering unique, individual perspectives, are an enduring and meaningful congregational tradition. The articles have been lightly edited for length.

Realigning by Meleah Houseknecht



It's a pleasure to address you on this threshold occasion of the New Year. This is also a threshold moment in my own life and vocation, and in so many ways this country as well.

One of the things that I've always appreciated about the High Holidays is that, instead of marking the end of one year and the beginning of the next in a single celebratory instant, we get ten days of reflection. We release the things that no longer serve us and recommit to the better version of ourselves. We do this, not through platitudinous resolutions but through introspection, honest appraisal of where we have failed to live up to our ideals, and actions that we believe can help return us to the path along which our gifts can blossom in and for the world.

But before we can start out on a fresh path, we need to recognize where we've gone astray. The Days of Awe are days of looking up, taking our bearings, and realigning.

In the late-90s, as a sociology major, I was introduced to the idea of environmental justice — the idea that achieving justice in the world requires ensuring a healthy, safe, and stable environment for all *people*, and therefore also protecting and restoring the *living systems* of which we are an inextricable part. I pursued a career in the environmental field because I believed it was the material basis for a world where everyone can thrive.

I trained as an organizer and spent my early twenties advocating for environmental health and community sustainability. I pursued graduate training to better understand the physical and political systems that mediate our impact on the world around us. Over 20 years working in environmental policy, I found myself focused on more technical and incremental “solutions” to problems that I knew had deeper roots.

The election of Donald Trump in 2016 was a wake-up call. It launched me and my then-colleagues into a reckoning with our relationships to power, as well as the limitations of the political system to produce the kind of world we thought we were trying to build.

What realignment looks like is different for everyone. For me it resulted in the unexpected turn towards religious life. I wanted to know what it is about our different understandings of what it means to be human, what it means to be responsible, and what it means to be good, that were enabling the ecological crisis *and* that might help unlock new ways forward. I needed to take a deep dive into theology and the stories we tell — the oldest ones and new ones too — about where we come from and where power comes from and what it means to belong to one another.

It turned out that the questions I was best suited to wrestle with were the questions we ask in religious community.

I didn't go to seminary to become a minister, so much as to figure out how to get back on track with *my* North Star. I had lost track of my own calling.

As a Religious Naturalist and a Humanist I don't believe that there's a supernatural God to seek forgiveness from, which is all the more reason that we need communities like this one — to support each other in the work of asking *hard* questions about what we believe is true and meaningful and valuable about this one precious life we've been given; to find the courage to recognize the *radical* implications of a belief in the equal worth and dignity of all people and our responsibilities as a part of an interdependent and evolving whole; and to be each other's wayfinders when we lose the path.

Continued on next page

High Holiday Member Commentaries

Realigning by Meleah Houseknecht ... continued

These are the Days of Awe, liminal times of realignment. And we know some things are very, very off course. None of us can right the whole ship, but luckily, being flawed human beings, none of us is responsible for the whole. What we can do is hold onto each other as we seek our own highest calling at a time when the world needs us. A new year brings new opportunities to be bold in our speech and our action on behalf of a hurting and divided world. I'm grateful to be on this journey with you all. We're entering dangerous waters. The world needs us, and we need each other.

Having a Strong and Generous Spirit for a Time of Renewal by Richard D. Logan



In 1988 when his first son Jesse was born, Johnny Clegg — secular, humanist, Jewish, South African musician, anthropologist and anti-apartheid hero (and Society for Humanist Judaism's Role Model for 2023-24) — wrote a song for Jesse called "Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful World." It became one of Johnny's many beloved anthems. It was South Africa's "Hey Jude" if you know that song's story.

It had lines like, "You've got to wash with the crocodiles in the river you've got to live with the crooked politician ..." I start with this because it applies today. Here we are, in the midst of cruel extremes, and even our better angels can be insecure, uncertain, and lacking moral courage. It is hard to maintain the generosity and strength of spirit the High Holidays ask of us.

I want to share examples of selflessness and a resilience of spirit that have inspired me in hard times from research I have done on hundreds of survivors of extreme ordeals (I wrote two books on this subject), and from my anthropology work with other cultures.

So, meet 13-year-old Indigenous Colombian girl Lesly Mucutuy. In 2023, she and her three younger siblings — one an 11-month-old baby — were the only survivors of a plane crash deep in the dense Amazon rain forest.

Somehow this small girl kept all of her siblings alive and safe for 40 days, with few supplies, in a very deadly place. For all those 40 days she barely slept as she scrounged food, made shelters, and kept vigil over them every night. Of hundreds of survivors I have studied, she is one of the greatest heroes — and one of the most selfless people. If this little girl could prevail, maybe we can too. Thanks to her living entirely for her siblings for 40 days, all siblings are doing well now. Her example also helped bring greater conciliation between indigenous people and the rest of Colombian society and government.

One conclusion I drew from those who survive the worst there is, is that they often come out being better people than the rest of us. Think of the connection between Nelson Mandela's brutal 27-year imprisonment and his later generous reconciliation. If he could come out of a brutal time with a generous and resilient spirit, and make a difference, maybe we can too. Think of Viktor Frankl, concentration camp survivor who wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*. He has inspired many about the strength of the human will and the generosity of the human spirit, despite horrific experiences. Frankl helped shape the field of Humanistic Psychology, closely akin to what our values in Humanistic Judaism are, and a field that says humans are innately more good than evil.

My friend, Terry Jo Duperrault, was eleven in 1961, when her entire family was murdered at night on a boat in the Bahamas. She escaped the killer, then scrambled to untie a float on the deck just as the boat was sinking, then survived four days floating alone on the sea. After her ordeal, she spent years remaking herself, becoming a dedicated public servant working with the Wisconsin DNR. Over 60 years later, she is the greatest grandmother you will ever meet, and another lesson in generosity of spirit. She forgave the man who killed her family. And she has devoted her life to something larger, the environment.

Continued on next page

High Holiday Member Commentaries

Having a Strong and Generous Spirit for a Time of Renewal by Richard D. Logan ... continued

One memorable afternoon in a traditional village outside of Nairobi, I listened for hours to a village elder share a doctoral-dissertation-level explication of how, and why, in the traditional village, there would never — ever — be an abandoned child or a forgotten elder. The network of kinship relations was so strong that the traditional village community was a singular living organism not just a collection of individuals. A real community. The village had everyone's back. A main feature is that they resolved conflicts by judgments from elders and then held ceremonial apologies in front of the entire community.

Look at the Pacific Islands: Across Oceania, the highest traditional value is service.

I spent a decade with an Amish community. They live by a creed they call "JOI" — J (Jesus comes first), O (the Other person comes next), I come third. Compare that to our majority-Christian country where, for far too many, the real God is the Self. The Amish put something larger than ourselves ahead of everything else. For us that would be our community, or a movement or cause. Not the culture of narcissism for which we have too many role models.

The Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina. Two generations later, with some leaders Jewish, they are still marching for Argentina's disappeared grandchildren.

What makes all of these people have strong and generous spirits? First, they put others before themselves, and then they work with others to build something larger than themselves, like community — something the Jewish world always needs. These people all stayed resilient and kept a generous spirit in the hardest of times.

Take inspiration.

Yom Kippur 2025 by Alan Miller

I'm 91. I mention that only as a historical reference for my talk.

I had the upbringing of a good Jewish boy — my mother had been raised Orthodox — so I went to Hebrew school, Sunday school, Saturday morning services, and was Bar Mitzvah'd. I was well indoctrinated. My parents cleverly arranged it so that my father was president of the temple and my mother president of sisterhood at my Bar Mitzvah. Ugh.



It was at the end of WWII, where some of our relatives came home, and others whom I had never met in Europe would never return to their homes. I asked my mother, "If there's a God, how come he let six million Jews die in the war; how did he let 50 million people die in WWII?"

She was taken aback; how could I be a skeptic? My father's answer was that God had a master plan, and it was not to be questioned. Don't get me wrong — by then I had been steeped in Jewish history and tradition, and proudly so, but I found it difficult to accept their answers.

I attended church on occasion with my friends and learned about Jesus, who was allegedly sent to earth to implement God's will.

But Jesus did not claim to be the son of God, and in fact his name appears only a few times in the New Testament. Nor was he a priest or a rabbi in the traditional sense, although respected for teachings and wisdom.

I asked how could he arise from the dead after three days, and was told that was because he was the son of God.

Continued on next page

Yom Kippur 2025 by Alan Miller ... continued

I have no doubt that Jesus existed, but I believe that after being crucified in his early 30s — by the Romans who feared him and his following — that he went into a coma, and awoke three days later. Medicine was not then what it is today, and we read often of people awakening from comas. It's my personal belief that that's what happened, but 2000 years ago, people were not as medically sophisticated, and so the myth began.

But that's just *my* belief.

As I grew older, I became more skeptical of the “God” concept. I explored atheism, where a person doesn't believe in any gods, and agnosticism which is, in my understanding, a person who doesn't claim to know whether any gods exist or not. I explored, in college, other religions and their beliefs. Deism, as I understand it, is an impersonal God who created the world, and then doesn't get involved or intervene in it. That's a hell of a thing; look at the mess we're in today. MY skepticism increased.

I was really surprised, in researching for this talk, to find that there are at least 181 religions, probably a lot more, who believe in a Deity, a God, and some in more than one — take your pick — Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, ethnic and Indigenous religions, and on and on.

Which ones are the right ones? Whose God prevails? I chose atheism early on. The famous lawyer, Clarence Darrow, almost a century ago, said, “I don't believe in God because I don't believe in Mother Goose.”

I was really shocked to read, only this week, that hordes of people are relying on AI, artificial intelligence, in a “faith tech” industry powered by religious apps, like [Pray.com](#), for advice or to confess their sins. One British rabbi said that “spiritual apps are their way into faith.” Forgive me father, but MY faith cannot come out of a computer. It is within me.

Don't get me wrong — if prayer gives you comfort or hope, helps you to understand injustice, I'm all for it.

But I call upon *all* these gods with these questions:

Why have millions of people died and continue to die in senseless wars?

Why do people who strive for good government die in assassinations?

Why are the people of Gaza dying by the tens of thousands when food to feed them is wasting on the shelves?
And life-saving drugs are being incinerated?

Why do people praying in churches get gunned down, and why have there been countless school shootings of innocent children?

Why does any child go to bed hungry?

Why are so many children born with illnesses and deformities?

Why do a few have so much while the vast majority has so little?

Why is democracy, the greatest experiment in governing, threatened today by autocratic and ignorant men and women bent on its destruction?

I could go on and on, but until I get some answers, I'll continue to believe that my God is within me, and I'll remain a Jewish atheist. If *any* of your gods want to contact me, including computer gods, it's alanmillermn@gmail.com.

- Author *Fire Fight in Shelter Rock* (latest)
- TV [Access to Democracy](#), [Writers' Corner](#)

Jewish Cultural Sunday School (JCSS) Update

Molly Phipps, JCSS Director



In September, the JCSS school started its second year at **Twin Cities German Immersion School in St. Paul**. We started the year with the High Holidays. Students blew the shofar, sang Rosh Hashanah songs, and practiced *tikkun olam* by picking up trash.

In October, we celebrated Sukkot and classes made decorations for our new sukkah (a pop-up tent frame courtesy of Jeff Pipes), decorating it with their creations and corn stalks. Rabbi Eva led a service, and we shared a light snack in the sukkah (see photos).

Hanukkah was celebrated with a large turnout on December 14th at the First Unitarian Society. We look forward to the Tu B'Shevat seder on February 1, 2026.

It has been a season of change at JCSS as teachers and the school demographics shift. The past few years have seen our older grades grow and our younger grades shrink with the overall size of the school remaining relatively stable.

The current Littles class has only two students this year while the Juniors has over a dozen. We've been able to shift our aides and volunteers around to accommodate these changes. Two of last year's teachers, Juniors teacher, Sam Wegner, and longtime Littles teacher, Colline Rolland, are not returning.

While finding adults interested in taking on these roles has been difficult, our congregation's teenage leaders have stepped up this year. Since 2022, we have had aides in our classrooms. Last school year we had a robust group of four aides: Kai Dickson, Aayush Dongre, Isaac Rinerson, and Julian Young, who supported the teachers in the Littles, Middles, and Juniors classes. Each one is a graduate of our JCSS program. This year, three of them are stepping into teaching roles. Isaac Rinerson is leading the Middles and Aayush Dongre and Julian Young will be co-leading the Juniors group. All three come highly recommended by current and former JCSS teachers who have worked with them.

Our emerging teachers will be supported with curriculum, lesson plans, hands-on assistance, and supervision by me, [Sarah Berman-Young](#), Ian Zukor, and Arielah King. We're excited to work together to support our capable younger teachers over the school year. It says a lot about our congregation that we have high school youth who want to be so involved.

While we're thrilled to have interest in teaching among our high schoolers, they're not a long-term solution since they'll be headed off to college.

If you've ever thought about JCSS teaching, please let me know. We're often looking for subs and that could give you a chance to try it out. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please put me in touch with them.



Sukkot Celebration

For more information about Or Emet's Jewish Cultural Sunday School, visit the [School Blog](#) on the Or Emet website, [oremnet.org](#). Visitors are welcome to join JCSS classes. To arrange a visit, learn more about JCSS, the Youth Program, and/or for school-related questions and issues, email school@oremnet.org.



Social Justice/Social Action Committee Update

Howard Schneider, Committee Chair



Loaves & Fishes serves free, healthy meals to Minnesotans where the need is greatest.

Loaves and Fishes has changed how meals are provided to guests at Holy Rosary Church. Take-out boxes of food are no longer handed out at a side door. Now, a sit-down cafeteria style meal is provided inside the church building. We began our volunteer activity nearly a year ago and November 19 was our first in-person meal service.

We previously prepared more than 400 meals for pickup. However, so far, slightly more than 100 persons come inside for the sit-down dinner. We're puzzled, but Angela, the Holy Rosary coordinator, has two observations:

- People living outside, unhoused, are reluctant to leave all that they own on the street unattended while they eat a meal inside the church.
- Guests previously could take home many take-out meals to share with others at home or on the street or have food for more than one night.

It's enjoyable to work together and, most important, it puts in practice our highest values.

— If interested in volunteering, email Howard Schneider at hamptonmeadow@msn.com.

REFUGEE SHABBAT

The Friday, March 20, service features the annual **Refugee Shabbat** program with Alice Buckner, Executive Director of Minnesota's Karen Organization.

It's unsettling to write about this event amid increased ICE actions throughout the Twin Cities and Trump's deeply hurtful comments about our Somali community. We've never heard publicly such openly racist comments from a president in our lifetime. We could look back 195 years to President Andrew Jackson to find comparable language. He promoted racist ideas about Native Americans and pushed for the 1830 Indian Removal Act that led to the forced relocation of Native tribes from the East Coast to Oklahoma Territory, resulting in an estimated 20,000-30,000 deaths. The current refugee crisis reflects another chaotic time in which we're living.

Michal Moskow - News from Immigration Court at Fort Snelling



Michal is a trained Immigration Court Monitoring volunteer with the Advocates for Human Rights (AHR). She observes hearings at the Immigration Court to document concerns related to due process. Here is a "behind-the-scenes" look at what she has witnessed recently:

- Rising denials. Asylum denials increased to 75% from January through August 2025, up from an average denial rate of 70% over the previous seven years.
- Decreasing transparency. Communication with Immigration Court has diminished. Courtrooms are now locked to observers, and posted dockets — once containing names, photos, and contact information — are heavily redacted, making monitoring much more difficult.
- Immediate arrests. What was once uncommon has become routine: when cases are dismissed, asylum seekers are frequently arrested just outside the courtroom and taken elsewhere in the building, often leading to detention or deportation.

Recent cases Michal has observed have primarily involved Hispanic individuals seeking legal status. Michal highlights the wide variation among judges. In Minnesota, approval rates range from just 11% to as high as 60%. According to Michal, some of the more reasonable judges have recently been let go.

Or Emet members are welcome to join the Social Justice/Social Action Committee and/or offer input on activities and issues.

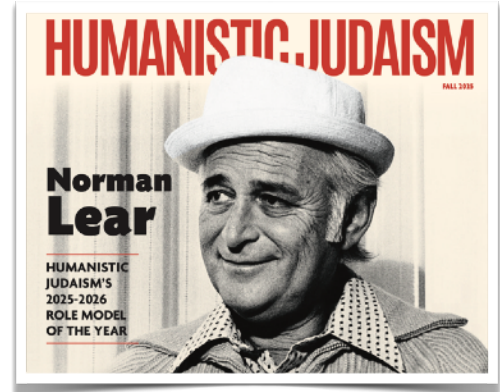
If you wish to be involved, contact Howard Schneider at hamptonmeadow@msn.com or 651-278-2286.

Norman Lear Society for Humanistic Judaism's 2025-2026 Role Model

by Richard D. Logan

Every year, the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) chooses a consequential secular Jew as a *Role Model* whose life's work exemplifies the values of Humanistic Judaism. SHJ shares the Role Model with our communities to study. The choice for 2025-2026 is television giant **Norman Lear**, whose sitcoms creatively combined humor with drama in confronting serious issues.

Norman Lear's television legacy was clearly shaped by his progressive Jewish humanism. Though Lear did not present his Jewish identity in his sitcoms, his insistence on the dignity of every person, commitment to justice, and belief in debate as a path toward understanding — reflects a Jewish humanistic sensibility. His shows became, in effect, moral classrooms disguised as living rooms, where America grappled with its own prejudices.



Growing up during the Depression and experiencing antisemitism helped nurture Lear's sensitivity to bigotry. This sensibility animated *All in the Family*, where Archie Bunker's loud prejudices served as a mirror for the country. But Lear never portrayed Archie as a monster; instead, he used humor to humanize everyone. That refusal to dehumanize even the bigot embodies a Jewish humanist tradition that sees every person as capable of growth. Archie's foil, the progressive Michael "Meathead" Stivic, often voiced Lear's own ethical commitments.

In *Maude*, he explored feminism, reproductive freedom, and personal responsibility, with a novel bluntness but humorous honesty. *Good Times* and *The Jeffersons* confronted the realities of systemic racism while still insisting on the complexity and individuality of Black families and communities. These shows rejected stereotypes by spotlighting characters with agency, humor, and contradictions — a humanistic impulse that stems from Lear's conviction that telling the truth about people's imperfections is important too.

Norman Lear earned many honors and awards over the many decades of his work, including six Prime Time Emmys and the prestigious Kennedy Center Honors. He also received two Peabody Awards, the National Medal of the Arts, the Marian Anderson Award, a Woody Guthrie Prize, a Golden Globe, the Television Critics Association award, and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Notably from our perspective, he received the *Humanist Arts Award* from the American Humanist Association.

In creating a television landscape that embraced social conscience, Lear helped redefine what popular culture could accomplish. His shows made difficult conversations unavoidable and normalized empathy — even with the bigot — as a public value. His work endures as an affirmation that humor, truth, and moral responsibility can coexist — and that, together, they can shift culture. In this way, Norman Lear brought in a distinctly Jewish humanist tradition that transformed American television into a tool for democratic reflection and thoughtful engagement in social issues.



HIGH HOLIDAY COLLECTION OF FOOD / PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

The photo shows the large quantity of food and personal care items collected at High Holiday Services that was delivered to Hallie Q. Brown Community Center. Established in 1929 with a focus on the Rondo community and the broader Twin Cities Metro area, Hallie Q. Brown operates a variety of programs that address the needs of community members.

From the Desk of Jeff Pipes. On Emet President

"No Kings" Protest



On October 18, over a dozen Or Emet members including Rabbi Eva and her family joined the nationwide protest in downtown Minneapolis. More than 7 million of us rose up at more than 2,700 events in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and cities worldwide to say:

America has no kings, and power belongs to the people.

Over 100,000 Minnesotans joined in resisting the current administration's onerous policies of deporting hardworking families, refugees fleeing violence and oppressive political and economic situations in their home countries. We also were there to affirm something deeper: that power belongs to the people, that democracy is worth defending, that we still believe in a government of, by, and for the people.

Or Emet will continue participating in similar events. We are looking for a member to help us set up and oversee a Signal group so that we can share information on upcoming events. Signal offers private connections without sharing phone numbers via usernames. Contact Jeff at president@oremet.org if you can help.

Website Update

Watch for the upcoming release of our newly redesigned and more functional website. We plan to go live within the next few weeks with a more welcoming digital front door, designed for visitors and members alike.

You'll see easier and more secure ways for donations and memberships, a more streamlined, mobile-friendly experience, and easier, more intuitive navigation and fresh content showing our smiling *punim*. Everyone will more easily discover our vibrant community with an engaging homepage including links to staff, programs, ideals, events and links to Humanistic Judaism resources.

Strategic Planning Update

Beginning this spring, we will initiate a strategic planning review. This effort is all about listening to each other. Our first steps will be designing and distributing a poll and hosting discussions to gather your insights, hopes, and ideas. This is your opportunity to help shape the direction of our shared congregational vision. Where do you want to see Or Emet in 10 years?

This process will likely extend into next fall, giving us plenty of time to consider everyone's opinions and assessments. We want to benefit from both long-term members' institutional knowledge and to engage younger and newer members who will be the ones to inherit our legacy and carry us forward.

We need help designing the poll and envisioning how we will go about making the process inclusive. If any of you have nonprofit or corporate experience in doing this, please let Rabbi Eva or Jeff know.

Continued on next page

From the Desk of Jeff Pipes. Or Emet President ... continued

Estate Planning Seminar

This April, we will host an estate planning seminar with experienced attorneys and financial professionals. While many of us intend to create or update an estate plan, my years in legal practice taught me that it's something we often postpone. This seminar is an opportunity to finally get it done — with clarity, support, and guidance from experts.

Our goal is to help each of us understand what we need to protect ourselves, our families, and our wishes. We will also explore how thoughtful planning can strengthen our congregation and sustain its long-term mission. Throughout the program, we'll weave in the Jewish values of *hesed* (deep commitment), *shalom bayit* (peace in the home), and our shared responsibility to the broader community.

Topics will include:

- Wills and basic estate documents
- Powers of attorney
- Health care directives and living wills
- HIPAA releases
- Beneficiary designations for retirement plans, life insurance, and annuities
- Planning for incapacity
- When various types of trusts are useful and appropriate

As a Humanistic Jewish congregation, we will also discuss respecting both secular and Jewish end-of-life customs, the role of ethical wills (*tzava'ot*) in passing on values and personal stories, and how charitable legacies can reflect our humanistic and Jewish commitments — including supporting education, social justice, and the future vitality of Or Emet.

Caring Circle

We're here when you need a little extra support



Or Emet's Caring Circle (CC) offers simple, practical, short-term assistance and support to members in times of illness, loss, and crisis. This support supplements and coordinates with other resources (e.g., family, friends, community, professional).

Anyone can let the CC know if they, or a person they know, want or need attention — from a simple card to a personal phone call, an email, a one-time visit, or something more frequent.

— Sarah Ruiz is a trained hospice volunteer and has begun to provide companion visits.

— Our Meal Train is available for Or Emet members who cannot obtain food any other way during recovery from an illness or when experiencing a challenge, making shopping or meal preparation problematic.

Strict safety guidelines will be followed during meal preparation and delivery.

Or Emet wants to meet challenges and provide assistance to members when possible.

Email CaringCircle@oremet.org for more information.

Caring Circle Committee: Rabbi Eva Rose Cohen, Megan Narvey, Karen Cohen, Janet Mayer, Daniel Lupton, Faith Oremland, Bruce Pomerantz

Member Article

How Soon They Forget

by Alan Miller

I pored over the newspapers on November 9 and 10 and watched as many newscasts as I could, but only found one reference for what I was looking for. I decided to ask people I know what the significance of those dates meant, and virtually came up empty. I would wager that this result would have been consistent with people of all ages, except for perhaps a few old-timers like me.



Kristallnacht took place on those dates — the night of broken glass. On the pretense of the shooting of a German official by a 17-year-old in Paris two days earlier, the Nazi government unleashed a well-orchestrated pogrom of German Jews throughout Germany and Austria. It was carried out not only by the "brown shirts" of the Nazi regime, but by ordinary citizens, on people who had been their neighbors, and in some instances, their friends. Dozens were killed, 30,000 Jewish males were rounded up and sent to concentration camps (although most were freed two days later), almost every synagogue in Germany and Austria — 267 in all — were set afire, looted and destroyed. Thousands of businesses owned by Jews were also recipients of the same destruction, and it was the precursor to the horrors of World War II. That was only 87 years ago.

Today we live in a country where masked men, armed with long guns, are rounding up and in many instances physically injuring people, particularly those of color, on the pretense of ridding the country of illegal criminal immigrants. Don't get me wrong — people who entered illegally and who committed crimes (not DMV violations, etc.) have no place in this country. That was ostensibly the rationale, much the same as the false reasoning behind *Kristallnacht*. It's not criminals who make up the vast percentage of deportees, but rather people who have lived here peacefully for decades, who have businesses and families, and who frequently do jobs that other Americans shun, often for minimal wages.

And who are these masked terrorists? Don't they feel any guilt when they act without conscience and contribute to a reign of violence on both men and women, some in the presence of their children. There are now dozens of cases of American citizens who have been rounded up illegally, some even deported, often on flimsy or false charges. It is a shameful stain on our nation that will remain for decades; it is a deprivation of due process, which is fundamental to our democracy. It threatens our very way of life.

This too shall pass, but the damage is done, and in many ways it is disgracefully reminiscent of what happened in Europe, albeit to a lesser degree, 87 years ago. How soon we forget.

Member News | *Simchas and Tsuris*



Nova Serai Revilla was born on September 21. Her parents are Julia Cohen and Hector Revilla. Barry Cohen and Molly Wilbur-Cohen are her adoring grandparents. Rabbi Eva Cohen is Julia's sister and Nova's auntie. Grandparents, Aunt Eva, and cousin Freyja have all traveled to Philadelphia to spend time with Nova — more trips will be happening.

On Emet Celebrations

Family-Friendly Yiddish Shabbos - November 21



Brief Humanistic Shabbat service led by Or Emet's Rabbi Eva Cohen



Yiddish music and dance instruction by Di Bayke Klezmer Band



Hanukkah Party - December 14



SHABBAT PROGRAMS

Shabbat programs meet at the **Minnesota JCC Sabes Center**, 4330 S. Cedar Lake Rd., St. Louis Park.

Programs include a brief Humanistic Shabbat service and are followed by social time.

Saturday | January 24 | 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Program: *The State of White Christian Nationalism and Anti-semitism; the experience of being fired from the Commentary staff of the Star Tribune.*

Presenter: Angela Denker, former Star Tribune commentary writer. Nationally known speaker and book author.

Saturday | February 21 | 10:00-11:30 a.m.

Program: *AI-driven Data Center Boom in Minnesota*

Presenter: Evan Mulholland, staff attorney, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Friday | March 20 | 7:30-9:00 p.m.

Program: *Refugee Shabbat*

Presenter: Alice Buckner, Executive Director of the Karen Organization of Minnesota

Friday | April 24 | 7:30-9:00 p.m.

Program: *My Work With Sheila and Paul Wellstone*

Presenter: Marcia Avner, public policy expert, Director of Communications for the late Paul Wellstone

Friday | May 29 | 7:30-9:00 p.m.

Program: *YMCA Center for Youth Voice*

Presenters: Students speaking about their involvement in the Model United Nations program and work in civic engagement with James Farnsworth, program director

SUNDAY PROGRAMS

Sunday programs meet at: **Twin Cities German Immersion School** 1031 Como Ave, St. Paul.

Adult programs meet concurrently with Jewish Cultural Sunday School classes.

Programs conclude with social time for everyone.

Sunday | January 11 | 10 a.m.-noon

Program: *Jewish Communities in Ancient Egypt*

Presenter: Patricia Ahearne-Kroll, Ph.D., Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Classical and Near Eastern Religions and Cultures, University of MN

Sunday | February 8 | 10 a.m.-noon

Program: *From Fork to Forest: Why We Can't Solve the Climate Crisis Without Changing How We Eat*

Presenters: Nicola Philpott, co-leader of MN West Suburbs chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby and Anna Larsen, Climate Reality Executive Team member.

Sunday | March 8 | 10 a.m.-noon

Program: *Jews and Comics*

Presenter: Richard Logan, Ph.D., Or Emet Past-President, Past President of the Society of Humanistic Judaism, retired Professor of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

Sunday | April 12 | 10 a.m.-noon

Program and Presenter TBA

Sunday | May 17 | 10 a.m.-noon

Program: *Turning the Bend: When It's Time for Senior Services*

Presenter: Roni Falck, MSW, Senior Services Program Coordinator for Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minnesota

Reminder!

We continue to collect empty pill bottles and personal care items for clients at Listening House, a St. Paul drop-in center. Donations are gratefully accepted at all Shabbat and Sunday programs.

Donations**For Or Emet's General Fund**

Paul Hardt
Sharon and Alan Miller
Lydia Fess and Garrett Schultz

In celebration of Allan Malkis' Bar Mitzvah

Jacalyn Krammer

In celebration of Nova Revilla's birth to Julia Cohen Revilla and Hector Revilla and

grandparents Molly Wilbur-Cohen and Barry Cohen and Julia's sister, Rabbi Eva Cohen

Carol and Richard Logan
Joan Barnett

Fundraising Drive donations to the Or Emet Rabbi Fund — *in memory of Dr. Harold Londer* — support Rabbi Eva Cohen's position. These contributions will help ensure the congregation continues to benefit from her inspiring leadership.

Donations may be made via [GiveButton](https://www.givebutton.com), through Or Emet's website oremnet.org,

or by sending a check to Sergei Rakhmanov, Or Emet Treasurer, 1957 Bayard Ave. St. Paul, MN 55116

Special Events / January - June 2026

NATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY — Friday, January 16, 2026 | Details TBA

Contact Jeff for further information at president@oremet.org.

Welcome Brunch

Sunday | January 18 | 2026 | 10 a.m.-noon | West Metro location details provided at sign up.

For new Or Emet members, prospective members and others interested in learning about Or Emet.

Families with children are welcome. Membership information is available on Or Emet's website, oremet.org.

If you are interested in attending and for more info, contact president@oremet.org.

Or Emet Book Club | January 25 | 2026 (alt-weather date February 1) | 10:30 a.m.-noon | at The Kenwood

Book to be discussed: *The Flight Portfolio* by Julie Ottinger

Bruce Pomerantz, bruce.f.pomerantz@comcast.net, is the book club organizer.

Passover Seder



Sunday | April 4 | 5-8 p.m. | First Unitarian Society | Minneapolis

Or Emet Annual Meeting and Congregational Picnic

SATURDAY | June 6 | 10 a.m. | Twin Cities German Immersion School



***Contemporary Humanistic Judaism* | Study Group via Zoom | 2026 dates and times TBA**

This group discussion focuses on Rabbi Adam Chalom and Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld's book titled "Contemporary Humanistic Judaism — Beliefs, Values, Practices"

Contact Jeff Pipes if interested in participating and/or with questions at president@oremet.org.

