



THE ILLUMINATOR

Or Emet – The Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

Spring/Summer 2026 issue
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Being Faithful to Our Words By Rabbi Eva R. Cohen

This winter was the coldest and the warmest that I remember. The ICE occupation was bone-chilling — and we the people of this metro area melted that ice with the ardent warmth of our [neighboring](#). I have never been so angry with our federal government and so proud of our community.

When I wrote my last *Illuminator* article, Operation Metro Surge was in the opening week of its ramp-up. Parents and neighbors had just started organizing ICE-watch shifts outside my daughter’s school. By December 9, ICE had attacked and detained [a U.S. citizen observer](#) and [multiple U.S. citizens of Somali heritage](#). We know the horrors that unfolded next. The Trump administration deployed over 3,000 ICE and CBP agents to Minnesota, who used [“brutally violent”](#) and [“controversial and unconstitutional tactics”](#) to arrest more than 3,700 Minnesota residents, [three-quarters of whom had no criminal records](#). These agents shot three and killed two people — including Alex Pretti on the morning of Or Emet’s January Shabbat service.

The people of the Twin Cities bravely resisted this brutality, protecting immigrant neighbors, defending human rights, and forcing the ICE occupation to end. We inspired a [Bruce Springsteen song](#), earned a [Profile in Courage Award](#), and showed the world that gentle, angry, peaceful, loving people can resist authoritarianism—and win.

Celebrating our resistance is not complacency. Though ICE arrests in Minnesota have [dropped hugely](#), we remain alert to ongoing activity. We also recognize the [enormous trauma and economic damage](#) left in the occupation’s wake — and we know that America’s authoritarian fever hasn’t broken. And, through all this, we feel pride in embodying the ideals that we read each Shabbat service:

We have pursued justice and peace.
We have loved kindness and compassion.
Our actions have been faithful to our words.



Or Emet members made important contributions to this resistance, including:

- Supporting immigrant family members, friends, and neighbors
- Packing and delivering food to people sheltering at home
- Training as observers, watching for ICE outside buildings and on commuting routes, observing at immigration court
- Donating money for rent relief and other mutual aid
- Protesting in sub-zero temperatures
- Committing civil disobedience
- Promoting and participating in the Day of Truth and Freedom, [“a unified, statewide pause in daily economic activity”](#)
- Lobbying elected officials
- Hosting an out-of-town rabbi who came [“to witness ... and take action in solidarity with immigrant communities”](#)
- Speaking with media (hat-tip to [Molly Phipps](#) and [Howard Schneider](#))
- Supporting me in uplifting our Humanistic Jewish values through clergy resistance ([this Moment interview](#) highlights some of my work; other powerful moments included speaking at a [vigil](#) outside MSP Airport’s deportation hub and addressing [“Jews Against ICE: How to join the fight”](#) webinar attendees)



President's Message

by Jeff Pipes

The Twin Cities have experienced a deeply challenging period following increased immigration enforcement activity. Neighborhoods and families faced real fear and disruption. As a congregation rooted in human dignity and responsibility, Or Emet responded with compassion and action.

Rabbi Eva spoke publicly at the No Kings! rally in partnership with the JCA and helped lead community vigils, including at Target. Congregants organized neighborhood support efforts, collected donations, and delivered groceries to individuals unable or afraid to leave their homes. The need continues. Immigration enforcement remains ongoing, and the human impact persists. We are called to continue showing up in meaningful ways.

Amid these challenges, we found joy and connection in celebrating together. Our Tu B'Shevat Seder brought together students and adults in a warm and engaging way. Our joint Purim celebration with First Unitarian Society was lively, including a stunning aerial performance during the Megillah reading. We held our largest Passover Seder to date, gathering with people of all backgrounds and identities, united in history, shared story, reflection, and celebration.

Looking ahead, we have a full and exciting season. This summer includes four B Mitzvah celebrations, our annual Havdalah picnic, and a night at the St. Paul Saints game. I encourage you all to join us. For anyone interested, we need help planning nights out, docent-led museum visits, Shabbat dinners, and more.

One of our most significant accomplishments this spring was launching our new website. Thanks to everyone who contributed, and especially Rabbi Eva. It will serve as a welcoming front door to Or Emet, making it easier for members and prospective members to engage with our community. Additional features are ready, or in development, to simplify event registration, holiday meal sign-ups, dues and donation processes.

With more than half of American Jews identifying as secular, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to ensure they know our congregation exists: a community that is inclusive, secular, values-driven, and deeply engaged in both Jewish life and the broader world. In a time when many are searching for meaning and belonging, Or Emet can be not just a congregation, but a vital community.

We remain in solid financial shape, thanks to the continued support of our members, generous donations, and careful stewardship by our executive committee and treasurer.

At the SHJ board meeting in Detroit, we learned that Or Emet compares very favorably with peer congregations. We are strong, with much to build on. Like other congregations, we also have work to do on engaging younger families, volunteer burnout and membership growth.

This summer we begin a strategic planning process to reflect and shape our future. We will start with a congregational survey beginning in late summer. Your voice will help answer important questions: Where do we want to be in 10 years? What should we be doing more, or less, of? How do we strengthen our community while ensuring long-term sustainability? Do we want or need growth? What is our identity? What kind of programming do we want?

Our Annual Meeting and potluck are Saturday, June 6. Watch your email for details. The current executive committee runs again as a slate. We will thank and recruit new volunteers. Think about what you might want to be involved in. We are seeking volunteers for the program committees, holidays, social action, outreach/publicity and volunteer coordination.

Or Emet is a volunteer-driven community. I want to thank everyone for volunteering and helping in so many ways. Looking ahead, we will focus on developing new leaders and creating more paths for involvement, especially for newer members and families.



Or Emet Annual Meeting



At the Annual Meeting, the Nominations Committee will present their recommended slate for the election to Or Emet's 2026-2027 Executive Committee. Members will have the opportunity to nominate additional candidates from the floor.

The current board and terms of office are:

- President (2026-2028): Jeff Pipes
- Vice President (2026-2028): Sarah Berman-Young
- Treasurer (2025-2028): Sergei Rakhmanov
- At-Large (2026-2028): Judith Tiferes
- At-Large (2025-27): Megan Brakob Narvey

All board members with expiring terms are running for a new term.

The Illuminator

Or Emet's member newsletter is published in August • December • May
newsletter-1@oremet.org
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At-Large Members

Judith Tiferes
Megan Brakob Narvey

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Or Emet Affiliations



International Institute for
Secular Humanistic
Judaism (IISHJ)

OR EMET ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 6, 2026 | 10 a.m. – noon | virtual and in-person

ANNUAL MEETING AND JEWISH CULTURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

at Twin Cities German Immersion School | 1031 Como Ave. | St. Paul

~ Final Jewish Cultural Sunday School session occurs during annual meeting

Agenda includes:

- Approval of 2025 annual meeting minutes - Jeff Pipes
- Executive Committee Report - Jeff Pipes
- Rabbi's report - Rabbi Eva Cohen
- Treasurer's Report - Sergei Rakhmanov
- JCSS teacher recognition
- Volunteer recognition and recruitment
- Slate of candidates presentation
- Election of 2026-2027 officers and executive committee members

PICNIC AT 12:30 P.M. FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL MEETING

AT TWIN CITIES GERMAN IMMERSION SCHOOL

Bring your own plates, cutlery, cups/glasses

>>> *At the day's events, the Social Justice/Social Action committee will collect items for donation:*

To NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center community food shelf

- Nonperishable food, personal care and hygiene products, cleaning supplies, pet and baby food, diapers.

To Listening House for clients experiencing homelessness and/or isolation

- Empty pill bottles and personal care items (no food)

Jewish Cultural Sunday School (JCSS) Update
by Molly Phipps, JCSS Director



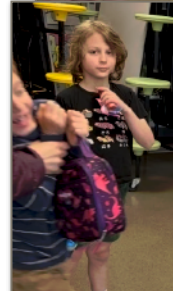
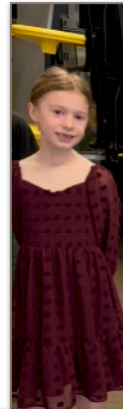
This Winter/Spring, JCSS students learned about biblical stories from a humanistic perspective, practiced *tikkun olam*, and celebrated holidays.

In February we celebrated **Tu B'Shevat** with our Humanistic Seder. In the dark of winter and the depths of Operation Metro Surge, we affirmed our hope for the future and celebrated the re-awakening of trees and other plants through the transition to spring.

Students planted lemon and orange seeds and made tree-themed art. The story of Honi, who meets a man planting carob trees for his future children and grandchildren just as others planted carob trees that he enjoyed, was especially poignant as many of us were supporting others in our community we would likely never meet.

We collaborated with the First Unitarian Society to host our **Purim Carnival** with a bouncy house and carnival games, making hamantaschen, and booing Haman, as Rabbi Eva read the Megillah accompanied by a stunning performance by aerial artist Jolie Melana Meshbesh. We packed snack bags and ramen-dinner boxes for students at MCTC. The Littles also made Queen Esther crowns to celebrate Purim.

In preparation for the **Passover Seder**, JCSS students learned about the Four Questions, Seder plates and other Passover necessities. At the Or Emet Passover Seder they sang the Four Questions and hunted for the afikomen. Our April session focused on *tikkun olam* in conjunction with Earth Day. The Juniors enthusiastically collected trash around the school to make their contribution to repairing the world.



For more information about Or Emet's Jewish Cultural Sunday School, visit 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.

Life Cycle Events

Or Emet offers a Youth B Mitzvah Program and an Adult B Mitzvah Program, both led by Rabbi Eva.

Along with attending JCSS classes, youth meet an extra time each month to take part in Jewish cultural, service, and *Tikkun Olam* activities chosen by their group. Adults prepare readings on topics ranging from the history of Judaism to finding our own Secular Humanistic Jewish "sacred texts" and meet as a group for seminar-style discussions. Both youth and adults also work individually, with support from Rabbi Eva and other mentors, to complete a project that explores a Jewish topic of personal interest through a humanistic lens. Presenting this project is the B Mitzvah ceremony focus. Ceremonies also feature students' original humanistic Torah commentaries.

Or Emet B Mitzvah ceremonies honor the larger family and community along with the individual B Mitzvah, so they are often scheduled in the summer to facilitate family and community involvement.

To learn more about becoming a B Mitzvah at Or Emet, contact Rabbi Eva (via president@oremet.org).

Youth B Mitzvahs

B Mitzvah Candidate	Date	Project Topic / Location
Leta Young	June 13	<i>The Jewish History of "West Side Story"</i>
Lila Busby	June 27	<i>French Jewish music</i>
Sam Binder	July 11	<i>Documentary on B Mitzvah history and personal experiences</i>
Rose King	July 18	<i>History of challah</i>

Bat Mitzvah Challah Workshop



Adult B Mitzvah

B Mitzvah Candidate	Date	Project Topic / Location
Stacy Brooks	October 24	<i>Finland's Jewish Community: A 200 Year History in 4 Quotes</i>



Social Justice/Social Action Committee Update

Howard Schneider
Social Justice/Social Action Chair



Or Emet’s Loaves & Fishes program is moving to Hope Presbyterian Church in Richfield. The schedule continues to offer two shifts — prep and serve at the site or prepare take-home boxes. Howard will reach out to volunteers when a first session is scheduled, hopefully this summer.

Update: Whipple Federal Building Immigration Court — Michal Moskow

DHS continues to detain immigrants and is increasingly holding electronic hearings for people in Minnesota before judges in other states. Observers are often barred admittance. By law, the hearings are open unless the person for whom the hearing is held requests a closed hearing. This makes it much more difficult to track people and to know what judges have ruled.

Refugee Shabbat followup

Our March program featured the **Refugee Shabbat** with Alice Buckner, Executive Director of Minnesota’s Karen Organization mnkaren.org. Alice Buckner (651) 202-3108 | abuckner@mnkaren.org

The Karen organization requests our help with the following:

- diapers and associated baby supplies
- volunteers, preferably with ICE Observer Training, to accompany people on USCIS interviews.

COLLECTION OF FOOD/PERSONAL CARE ITEMS

We have an established tradition of welcoming donations at Or Emet programs and services.

- *NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center* - receives food and personal care items from the annual meeting Consider a monetary donation to purchase fresh meat, milk, eggs, fruits/veggies — \$10 provides 24 meals.
- *Listening House* for clients experiencing homelessness and/or isolation Accepts empty pill bottles, personal care items, financial contributions

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.

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, wants or needs Caring Circle attention — from a simple card to a personal phone call, an email, a one-time visit, or something more frequent.

Email CaringCircle@oremnet.org if you would like assistance.

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.

Or Emet wants to meet challenges and provide assistance to members when possible. Strict safety guidelines will be followed during meal preparation and delivery. Email CaringCircle@oremnet.org for more information.

Caring Circle Committee

Rabbi Eva Rose Cohen, Karen Cohen, Daniel Lupton, Janet Mayer,
Faith Oremland, Bruce Pomerantz, Megan Brakob Narvey

On Emet's Hanukkah Party Highlights

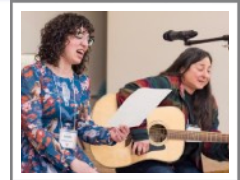
On December 14, a large group of members and friends celebrated Hanukkah at the First Unitarian Society. The event featured fun group crafts, dreidel games, songs, dancing, menorah lighting and a community dinner. Mittens and outerwear were collected on our Mitten Menorah and donated to the Neighborhood House.



On Emet's Passover Seder Highlights by Jeff Pipes



Or Emet celebrated a truly *heimish* Community Passover Seder this year at the First Unitarian Society, overlooking the Walker Art Center and the evening lights of downtown Minneapolis. With more than 120 members, family, and friends, the evening reflected the strength and vibrancy of our community. We were especially pleased to see many students from our



Jewish Cultural Sunday School (JCSS), and look forward to continuing to grow participation among our younger members in the years ahead.

Led by Rabbi Eva Cohen and our song leader Sarah, the Seder offered a meaningful blend of tradition, music and some needed contemporary reflection. Together, we retold the story of the Exodus through our unique Humanistic Jewish Haggadah readings and modern passages that encouraged thoughtful participation from every table. Despite a few technical challenges, Rabbi Eva and Sarah guided the Seder seamlessly.

This year, we built on last year's innovation by inviting table groups to come forward to lead portions of the reading. The result was lively, engaging, and often humorous, as groups encouraged one another to take part. It added a sense of shared ownership and created memorable moments of connection across the room.

Rabbi Eva's sermon offered a powerful and timely reflection, connecting the historical experience of our people with present-day realities. Her words invited us to consider themes of freedom, responsibility, and justice, particularly in relation to immigrant communities in the Twin Cities and the ongoing human suffering in the Levant. The impact was deeply felt, with many of us moved by the resonance of her message.

The meal itself was a highlight. Seder plates were prepared for each table by our dedicated committee and many volunteers. Dinner was catered by Ansari's Mediterranean Cuisine and was enjoyed alongside the traditional four cups of wine. The abundant homemade dessert table (matzo crack!) was a particular delight.

The evening was filled with the familiar joys of Passover: singing familiar songs with enthusiasm, sharing in the rituals that define the holiday, and enjoying the playful (and competitive) search for the Afikoman. Sarah and Amy led the community in classic songs, with a rousing "Had Gad Ya" bringing the evening to a joyful close.

This evening would not have been possible without the dedication and generosity of so many: Rabbi Eva and Sarah for their inspiring leadership and guidance and the holiday committee and volunteers for organizing every detail with care, helping to make Seder plates, set up, welcome guests, and clean up afterward.

As we reflect on this special evening, may the story of Passover inspire us toward greater compassion, connection, and a renewed commitment to freedom for all.

Dr. Harold Londer 1947 - 2020 | Or Emet Co-Founder and Madrikkh



On the occasion of Harold's sixth *yahrzeit* on July 29, we celebrate his memory and reflect on his pivotal role in the life of Or Emet.

Dr. Harold Londer was committed to guiding Or Emet from its founding in 1983 until his death in 2020. Our community would not exist as it does were it not for Harold's vision, energy, and dedication. Over the years, Harold inspired and mentored Eva Cohen and now she is carrying on his legacy in her Rabbinic position.

The Or Emet Rabbi Fund, in memory of Dr. Harold Londer was created in keeping with Harold's dedication to Or Emet and Humanistic Judaism. This memorial fund is intended to support Or Emet's continuing growth and Rabbi Eva Cohen's position. We invite you to honor Harold's memory by supporting Or Emet with your volunteerism and by contributing to the Rabbi fund.



Member Article

Death of the Voting Rights Act

by Alan Miller

I was born in a democracy almost 92 years ago. Now I fear I may die in an autocracy. In late April, the Supreme Court gutted, in a 6-3 decision, the remaining significant provision of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) which protected minority voters (primarily Black). The Voting Rights Act was carefully constructed to protect minority voters. The current President said on May 3 that it was imperative that Republicans keep control of both houses of Congress in the 2026 elections, even if people "had to vote twice." I have become used to such expressions from him but have always relied on the Supreme Court to retain a modicum of sanity.



The Court determined that the nation no longer requires congressional districts that are representative of their constituents, in effect, and that districts could no longer be drawn with consideration of race because, in the eyes of the chief justice, which he has expressed over decades, racial discrimination in this nation no longer exists. Immediately, governors, essentially in southern states, practically fell over each other in an effort to redraw districts which would deprive people of color from equal representation. In 1965, when the VRA was originally passed, there were only a handful of people of color elected to Congress. Today there are dozens.

In Mississippi, where one-third of the population is Black, there are still only two of its six representatives who are people of color. With the announcement of the Court's decision, the Mississippi governor immediately declared a state of emergency and canceled the primary election (although people had already begun voting by mail) until new district lines were drawn, which would leave at most only one district with minority representation. The imagined emergency? Black voters might have — equal rights!

With callous indifference this is now the law of the land. Which minority is next? To paraphrase German Pastor Martin Niemoller in World War II, " — then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me — and there was no one left..." to speak out.

This 2026 election, and the 2028 presidential election, are the most important in our lifetime.

Vote as if your life depends on it. It does!

Rabbi Eva Cohen's Community Activities — January - June 2026

- January 8 - standing with fellow clergy at Unidos MN and ISALAH [press conference](#) calling for justice for Renee Good
- January 9 - speaking at press conference organized by MSP Airport workers' unions calling for ICE Out (see coverage in second half of [this Religion News Service](#) article)
- January 15 - [testifying](#) with Jewish Community Action (JCA) before Minneapolis City Council in support of eviction moratorium during ICE occupation
- January 23 - leading Youth B Mitzvah Program students and families in joining downtown Minneapolis protest on "Day of Truth and Freedom"
- February 11 - speaking at JCA-led protest on "ICE Out of Target" day of action (participated independently - not under the Or Emet "banner")
- February 12 - speaking at "[Prayer Vigil and Press Action for Our Taken Neighbors](#)" at MSP Airport with ISALAH/ Faith in Minnesota and other partners
- February 19 - giving [Humanistic d'var Torah on Mishpatim](#) for SHJ's "The Portion of the Month Club"
- February 19 - speaking at "Jews Against ICE: How to Join the Fight" [webinar](#) organized by T'ruah, Bend the Arc, JCA, and Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
- March - joining Minnesota Rabbinical Association colleagues in collaboration with Gibson, Dunn & Krutcher, LLP in drafting and filing *Fridley v. Noem* amicus brief
- March 28 - leading pre-rally Kiddush and No Kings-themed Torah study session with Jewish Community Action
- April - joining group of Twin Cities faith leaders and organizations in collaboration with Howard University School of Law's Civil Rights Clinic in drafting and filing *Tincher v. Noem* amicus brief



Q&A | Minneapolis Rabbi Eva R. Cohen Stands with the Stranger

Moment Magazine February 11, 2026

<https://momentmag.com/qa-minneapolis-rabbi-eva-r-cohen-stands-with-the-stranger/>

National Day of Religious Freedom Forum

by Jeff Pipes



In January, Or Emet co-sponsored, together with HumanistsMN, the Twin Cities National Day of Religious Freedom Forum. The event brought together approximately 150 attendees, community members, elected officials, and advocates committed to upholding the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Or Emet hosted an information table, which provided an opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with attendees and share our community's Humanistic Jewish perspective. Special thanks to Rabbi Eva for representing Or Emet as a clear and compelling public voice throughout the event.

The keynote address was delivered by Fish Stark, Executive Director of the American Humanist Association. He gave one of the most hopeful and inspiring talks I've heard in several years. I highly recommend you read his presentation ([Fish Stark Remarks](#)).



Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) April Board Meeting Report
by Allan Malkis and Jeff Pipes

Allen Malkis, Richard Logan, and Jeff Pipes represented Or Emet at the SHJ Meeting in Detroit. Board members gathered for policy discussions, staff updates, shared meals and informal conversation.

Several SHJ programs remain strong and widely appreciated. These include the SHJ Magazine, the printing and distribution of Liberated Haggadah, Humanistic Jewish adoption resources, SHJ brochures and pamphlets and cultural B Mitzvah programming. In addition, the Jews for a Secular Democracy (JFASD) initiative continues to expand its reach through educational webinars and on-the-ground advocacy. They advocate for a pluralistic approach, seeking to rebuild a government free from religious coercion. In Minnesota, Jewish Community Action is partnering with this effort, providing an organized local connection to national work.

A central theme was financial sustainability as SHJ continues to run budget deficits. Reserves and investments provide short-term stability — long-term solutions are needed to strengthen operating income.

Challenges

- Evolving membership models: Dues-based structures no longer align with how younger generations engage
- Perceived value vs. cost: Perceived value may be less if lower or optional contributions
- Changing expectations: Balancing intimate community and highly professional programming
- Generational shifts: Attracting/retaining younger members in a less institutionally affiliated world
- Declining school participation: drops in youth engagement, threaten long-term continuity

Proposed responses

- Expanding SHJ Magazine as an outreach tool: gifting subscriptions, placing copies in public-facing spaces
- Testing with alternative financial models: voluntary annual pledges rather than fixed dues
- Learning from successful communities such as Or Emet’s educational programs
- Focusing on research and listening: What attracts younger adults

The board approved this year’s Humanistic Jewish role model, **Henry Morgentaler**. He is recognized for his courageous advocacy of reproductive rights in Canada. Randi Weingarten, the president of [American Federation of Teachers](http://www.aft.org) (AFT) was presented with the JFASD Constitutional Defender Award.

Donations



* The following is an incomplete listing of donations made since January 1

To Dr. Harold Londer Rabbi Fund in honor of Rabbi Eva Cohen

Joan Barnett
Richard and Carol Logan
Paul Petschke and Janet Mayer

In memory of Marc Katz

Joan Barnett
Richard and Carol Logan
Paul Petschke and Janet Mayer

In memory of Scott Oremland

Joan Barnett
Jane and Jack Katz
Richard and Carol Logan
Paul Petschke and Janet Mayer

For the birth of Laura Melnick and Mark Dahlager’s grandchildren, Seamus and Miriam

Joan Barnett

* Donations may be made through Or Emet’s website, oremet.org

in Memoriam

Beryl Greenberg, Or Emet member, died on February 7

Scott Oremland, son of Faith and Steve Oremland, died on March 24

Marc Katz, son of Jane and Jack Katz, died on March 27

May their memories be a blessing.

Humanistic Adoption¹



Adoption Reflections

Alkemy Frost

ne/nir/nem

About a year ago, I had my adoption ceremony with Or Emet. Before that was months of preparation, studying texts old and new, reflecting with a group of people also looking into adoption, and a meeting with a *beit din*². Everyone was friendly and accepting. It was quite comfortable to chat with my fellow students and even with the rabbis at the *beit din*. Needing to use text for communication wasn't a problem.

My ceremony was a modest event with Rabbi Eva, my partner, two friends, and myself gathered at the apartment building where I live. We had some food I made, we said blessings, and I shared some thoughts. It was a clumsy experience; I even spilled juice on the painting I had made. Still, it was nice and comfortable. I imagine kids going through their B Mitzvah probably feel clumsy themselves. Since then, I think I find it more comical, and Rabbi Eva is so kind. As nervous as I can get, there's really no need with how understanding she is. Speaking with her is always a good experience.

Before coming to Or Emet, I had gotten so far through a conversion process with a different shul before hitting a barrier I could do nothing about. Other congregations just weren't as accepting or accessible. Now, I'm considered part of a Jewish community. Some might still discount me, but there are some that think I count, and I went through a process to affirm that! It's not necessary, it's not strict, it's not demanding, but it can definitely mean something to feel officially accepted. To have made the deliberate decision to be counted. I even got a really nice certificate as physical confirmation with my Hebrew name!

All of this is a lot more than I had as a grandchild of a woman who gave up her Judaism long ago to marry a Catholic man. It's also meaningful to me as someone who blends in other, pagan, spiritual traditions. I really appreciate the process and being included in a way that worked for me.

¹ Humanistic Judaism uses the term "adopt" rather than "convert" because the person wishing to be Jewish is adopting both Judaism and our community, and that the community adopts those desiring to be part of the Jewish people.

Choosing This Step

Eli Effinger-Weintraub

they/them/theirs



Despite being born to two Jewish parents, I wasn't raised Jewish. In my mid 40s, I started tentatively exploring Judaism, but I felt like an interloper standing outside the tradition with my face smushed against the window. A well-timed conversation with my spouse in fall of 2022 reminded me that, yes, I am Jewish and, yes, I can claim and practice these traditions.

In the summer of 2024, Rabbi Eva helped me develop an Introduction to Humanistic Judaism independent study (syllabus available on request). That kept me happily poking into the histories, practices, and cultures of world Judaisms. When I finished the independent study in March of 2025, I knew I wanted to complete the SHJ adoption process. I knew I didn't have to do it to be "valid," but I liked the idea of a ceremony marking a new phase of my involvement in the community.

I originally pictured a self-designed and -led adoption ceremony loosely inspired by a *mikveh*³ and *beit din*. But couldn't pass up an actual *mikveh* and *beit din* (albeit highly personalized and idiosyncratic ones) when Rabbi Eva offered. My *beit din* consisted of Rabbi Eva, my dad (source of all my original Jewish knowledge), and my dear friend Kyle (a recent convert to Judaism who understands being on "my side" of the table). The *mikveh*, influenced by, but diverging from, Rabbi Miriam Jerris's hand immersion ceremony, involved plunging my hands into the Mississippi River—in February.

At the end of the ceremony, I felt the pride and commitment of choosing Jewish identity and community and, I hope, being chosen by it in return. I don't know what Judaism and Jewish community will ask of me, and I have only the faintest idea what I might ask of it. But I'm glad I took this step to deepen the relationship, whatever it holds for the future.

² While not required in Humanistic Judaism, adoptees may choose to meet with a *beit din* (a court or panel) comprised of three rabbis and/or other community members.

³ A *mikveh* (ritual immersion in water) is also not a requirement of Humanistic Adoption but it is becoming increasingly popular to reclaim and redesign immersion as a personal, symbolic ritual to mark life transitions without religious connotations.

Members



Amethyst Maddison — is experiencing both joy and sadness — she graduated from college with a BA in Sociology — Sadly her grandfather Samuel (Sam) Fillenbaum died at about the same time.

Phoenix Rakhmanov, graduated from St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists. They will attend University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.



Milo Brakob Narvey is shown eating Pickarel (Manitoba, Canadian for “Walleye”) on his mom Megan Brakob Narvey’s lap at his first secular Jewish wedding. Milo celebrated his first birthday on May 31.

“**We Are All Immigrants: After ICE surge, this group keeps up quiet resistance**”

MPR feature — April 9, 2026



“Operation Metro Surge” has ended but many Minnesotans are still protesting the federal immigration operation, including one group of men in a Minneapolis coffee shop. Howard Schneider, Or Emet member, is part of this group.



Howard Schneider

“**Grief, Whistles and Bad Dreams: Minnesotans Describe 2 Months in an Immigration Crackdown**”

New York Times, January 30, 2026



Or Emet Jewish Cultural Sunday School Director **Molly Phipps** is featured in [this New York Times piece](#). She talks about her response to the devastating ICE occupation of the Twin Cities.

“Molly Phipps, a consultant in St. Paul, never considered herself much of a crier.

That was before Operation Metro Surge in the Twin Cities: before roving federal agents arrested thousands suspected of illegal immigration and killed two U.S. citizens, before the protests, the fear of going out in public, the Signal chats, the cellphone videos, the ‘fweeeeet’ of the whistles . . .”

Molly Phipps



Faith Oremland and her son, Jeff (from Chicago) are participating in the ALS Therapy Development Institute (TDI) fundraising bike ride to honor her son, Scott, who had ALS and passed on March 24, 2026. Faith and her sons have bicycled together since the boys were little. Before ALS took away Scott’s ability to bike, Faith and Scott teamed up for several years doing duathlons around the Twin Cities and the annual St Paul Classic Bike Tour. To learn more about their efforts, or participate as a rider, volunteer or donor, click [here](#).



New Or Emet member **Tia Lauve** (she/her) will be lending her expertise to future editions of The Illuminator newsletter. Tia brings a decade of design and copywriting experience and currently leads marketing strategies for clients of the Foundry North agency within The Minnesota Star Tribune. While she is helping in a minor capacity for this issue, expect a new look and feel for the fall publication when we reconvene after the summer Havdalah. Is there anything you want to see included in The Illuminator moving forward? Any content themes you want explored in more depth? Illustrations or other art you'd like to contribute? Email Tia at tblauve@gmail.com with your notes, hopes, or kvetches!

2025-2026 Shabbat, Sunday Adult Programs, and Children's programs have wrapped up.
The 2026-2027 program year starts in September.

Updated program information is posted on the oremnet.org calendar and shared with Or Emet's listserv.

Or Emet Annual Meeting, Picnic, and JCSS Class | Saturday | June 6 | German Immersion School, St. Paul

- Annual Meeting with election of officers, 10 a.m. - noon
- Potluck Picnic | setup noon - 12:30 p.m. | picnic gathering 12:30 - 2 p.m.

Donated items will be collected during the day's events.

Additional information is on page 3 and in the president's weekly email.

Upcoming Youth and Adult B Mitzvah Celebrations | Detailed information on page 5

Baseball with Or Emet friends

St. Paul Saints vs. Toledo Mudhens | Saturday June 20 | 7 p.m. | CHS Field in St. Paul

Friday night fireworks follow the game!

The new ticketing system doesn't allow us to hold seats, so we'll need to act fast to sit together.

[Purchase tickets here](#) to go directly to Section 108. We're aiming for Rows 17 and 16, Seats 1-10 — grab yours quickly! If there don't seem to be tickets together, call Eric Simon, the group sales manager, at 763-703-5226 or 651-644-3517 and tell him you want to sit with Or Emet/Carrie Dickson. Questions? Email cdickson@umich.edu

Twin Cities Pride parade | Sunday | June 29 | 11 a.m.

To form an Or Emet contingent, contact Eli Effinger-Weintraub at eli.effinger.weintraub@gmail.com or 651-238-7000 (text or call).

Save the date! Havdalah and Picnic | Saturday | August 29 | 5 - 7 p.m. | Cherokee Park | St. Paul

Watch your email for sign-up information and further details.

Or Emet Book Club | Book selection, date, and location TBD

If interested in participating, contact Bruce Pomerantz bruce.f.pomerantz@comcast.net.

Or Emet's 2026 High Holiday services at First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

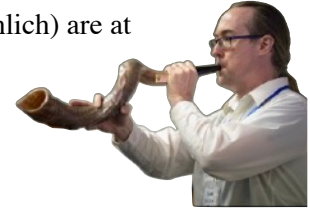
Schedule on back page

OR EMET 2026 HIGH HOLIDAY EVENTS

High Holiday Services (except Tashlich and Reverse Tashlich) are at

First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis
900 Mt Curve Ave

Services will be led by *Rabbi Eva Cohen*
~ offered virtually and in person ~



Rosh Hashanah Service

Friday | September 11 | 7 p.m.
Oneg following the service

Rosh Hashanah Tashlich Service and Potluck

Saturday | September 12 | 10:30 a.m. | location TBA

Reverse Tashlich

Reverse Tashlich is back! Details TBA.

Kol Nidre Service

Sunday | September 20 | 7 p.m.

Yom Kippur Service

Monday | September 21 | 4:30 p.m.

Break-the-Fast

At conclusion of the Yom Kippur service

In keeping with tradition, Or Emet will collect nonperishable food and personal hygiene items at High Holiday events. Donations will be shared with Hallie Q. Brown Community Center.

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OR EMET
MINNESOTA CONGREGATION
FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

