Immigration reform is in the headlines again. Whether due to practical political considerations, or true belief in its value (economically and/or morally) both parties seem committed to some change. The Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ), in October 2007, issued a resolution on this topic. It begins, “the fate of the Jewish people has been inextricably bound to issues of immigration and asylum for millennia” and goes on to strongly support a fair and compassionate program. (The entire statement, and others passed by the society, can be found at the society’s website in the Issues and Resolutions section).

Immigration policies have a long, often highly emotional history in our country. Initial U.S. policy was to welcome all immigrants. From its formation through the late 19th century, our country had no restrictions. As President Tyler stated in 1841, “we hold out to the people of other countries an invitation to come and settle among us as members of our rapidly growing family.” The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1849 that immigration was foreign commerce and could only be regulated by Congress.

Changes, however, were brewing. In the mid-1850s a massive Protestant anti-immigration movement (Know Nothing Party) elected eight governors and over a hundred congressmen, but failed to get restrictions against immigration through Congress.

The Page Act (1875) was the first law that restricted immigration. It was aimed against Asian immigration on the West Coast. It restricted coolie trade and banned entry of “immoral Chinese women.” Subsequent immigration laws were passed with laws as recently as 1943 restricting Filipinos, and in 1946 natives of India.

Immigration law clearly impacted Jewish immigration in the 1930s, preventing many from escaping the Holocaust. President Hoover reinstituted the Immigration Act of 1917 in 1930. Anti-Semitism was endemic at that time. After a trip to Detroit, Wilbur Carr, assistant Secretary of State, described the city as “full of dust, smoke, dirt, Jews.” After being in Atlantic City, Carr wrote in his diary, "The place is infested by Jews." The Act had a clause preventing immigrants considered likely to become a public charge, now known as the LPC clause. It required applicants to provide, among other documents, a police affidavit attesting to their good character. Jewish leaders argued this was not just difficult, but dangerous. One judge called it an almost insuperable obstacle. Much to my amazement, President Roosevelt told Carr, “The German authorities are treating the Jews shamefully and the Jews in this country are greatly excited... but this is not a governmental affair.”

I feel it is important that Humanistic Jews understand this history. It is one of the many reasons SHJ and Or Emet are so passionate about real immigration reform.
President’s Message

Learning and Growing Stronger
by Scott Chazdon

My message focuses on the things we have learned about our organization from two recent events — the High Holidays and the Leadership Team meeting.

A few themes bubbled up in the evaluation surveys of our High Holiday services. Members appreciated the involvement of young people, the improvements to the service booklet and the music, though some were less comfortable with the new songs or tempo. Many noted Eva’s growth and skills as a ritual leader.

This year we held a discussion on Jonah in lieu of a commentary. Most felt this participatory format worked well but prefer a different theme in future years. There were also some great suggestions, such as an idea that visitors introduce themselves before breaking for the Oneg.

Our Leadership Team discussion focused on three themes important for Or Emet’s future: marketing, volunteerism, and JCS parent engagement.

We identified these strategies for strengthening our work in each of three areas:

### Marketing

People find out about Or Emet through the Internet. We have to do more search engine optimization to make sure that people find our website when they type certain words in a search. We may also want to start purchasing ads on Facebook.

### Volunteerism

We know we are heavily reliant on volunteer efforts, a source of strength and strong member engagement. We balance that with the risk of volunteer burnout. In the next few months, we will conduct a membership survey to assess how much time people volunteer on average, their capacity, and their expectations.

### Jewish Cultural School Parent Engagement

Since the JCS sessions are monthly, there isn’t much opportunity for families to connect with each other or for the kids to get to know each other. One idea for building community among families was Friday night dinners, perhaps organized geographically or by JCS classes. The Society for Humanistic Judaism has created a Shabbat brochure that families can use at home, and hopefully with each other. The group also talked about creating social action opportunities for the post-B’Mitzvah teens in the congregation. We plan to engage JCS families in dialogue about ideas for deeper engagement at our February 17th Sunday program.

Let me know your thoughts!
Among the perks of having a child in Or Emet’s Jewish Cultural School (JCS) are the thoughtful adult programs held while students are in class. Recently, Paul Golin, Executive Director of the Society for Humanistic Judaism, presented a program called, “The Light Within Us: What Humanistic Jews Want Their Children to Know about Being Jewish.”

Why is it important to us to transmit that connection to our ancestral past? We give our children dreidels with four Hebrew letters signifying “a great miracle happened there” when most Humanistic Jews don’t believe in miracles. What is so vital about passing this past on to our children?

Paul offered one compelling piece of the answer. His mother was born in a resettlement camp in Europe. His grandmother was a Holocaust survivor but lost her first two children to the Shoah. Belief in God is not the issue — how does one turn one’s back on such sacrifice and suffering during the Holocaust, and through the ages? For most Humanistic Jews, allegiance is not to a set of protocols about prayer, whom we can marry, what we can eat — but to a legacy of kinship and survival that has endured over millennia to give us the gift of life. How can we let that legacy end at our own feet?

Paul addressed what to pass on in two questions:
▶︎ What will benefit our kids?
▶︎ What will help our kids be better people who make the world a better place?

Humanistic Jews typically reject memorization of ancient texts of dubious origin in a language most don’t understand, stating things we don’t believe and delivered in formal services that do little to challenge us. Rather, we focus on aspects of Jewish life that have enabled our survival: critical thinking, honesty and reason, adapting to change, working with others to solve problems, and embracing the arts to express and document our human experience.

Or Emet members shared their experiences and goals for their children.

One mother commented that in her children’s classrooms they may be the only Jews, and may also be the only ones who do not expressly believe in God — a minority twice over.

Through JCS, children have a place to connect with kids who share that particular world view and can thus normalize their own identity.

Another parent shared his teenage daughter’s objection to focusing on Jewish identity while being told to be a “global citizen.” Isn’t building up our Jewish identity just a way of separating people instead of uniting us? Paul’s insightful response was that this frame of reference around identity-boosting was tribalism. Instead he pointed to multiculturalism, an over-arching society able to embrace and share our differences, strengthening one another, rather than hoarding cultural legacy as our own property.

Nurturing our sense of uniqueness isn’t taking arms against others, but becoming more vibrant together.

A parent shared her grown child’s appreciation for the JCS experience. Yet, later in life he felt something was missing, as if he were not a complete Jew, lacking knowledge of doctrine and religious practice. While we strive to give our children what for us are the best aspects of Jewish identity, perhaps they will not grow up to be Humanistic Jews. All parents can do is choose what they believe their child will need and ultimately it is the child’s choice.

Paul’s two young children are Jewish and Japanese. While he and his wife are committed to both sides of their identity, he expects to feel sadness if, as adults, they reject their Jewishness. Yet, there are more important measures of his children. Are they kind? Are they open to and inclusive of others? Do they apply themselves to make the world a better place? “Are they proud of their Jewish identity” is on the list, but not primary. We can give our children what we believe is the best of our inheritance, but then we must trust them to find its place in their lives.
The Social Justice/Social Action Committee collaborated in development of the December and March programs:

Looking Back: December Program

On July 19, 2018, seven years after it was first proposed, the Israeli Knesset approved a sweeping bill entitled Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People. The bill, commonly referred to as the Nation State Law, has generated dissension within Israel and among some quarters of the American Jewish community.

“Whither Israeli Democracy” was presented following Or Emet’s December 15 Shabbat service to offer an understanding of the bill and how it may affect Israeli democracy.

The first section of the law states its basic principles, which are as follows:

A. The land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established.

B. The State of Israel is the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination.

C. The right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.

Issues stirring controversy include the naming of Hebrew as the sole state language, with Arabic placed in an as yet undefined “special status.” Additionally the State views development of Jewish settlement as a national value, and will act to encourage and promote its establishment and consolidation.

Looking Ahead: March Program

On March 17, 2019, the Sunday morning adult program will be “Living with Different – not Dis – Abilities.” Guest Lori Leder-Fogel, proud parent of a daughter with autism will speak about her advocacy for children on the autism spectrum, and Or Emet member Gwyn Leder will share her experiences living with the effects of a brain injury. Both Lori and Gwyn serve on Jewish Family and Children’s Services “Jewish Inclusive Collaborative.” Discussion will focus on questions about and supporting those whose lives are impacted by disabilities.

Serving Christmas Lunch at St. Stephens

We decided to serve a festive lunch when we noticed that no organizations had volunteered over Christmas. This will be challenging but our team, led by Claire Press, has a knack for accomplishing what we set out to do. Our next regularly-scheduled Saturday dinners at St. Stephen’s will be on January 26 and April 27.

Mitten Menorah

The Hanukkah Party featured a novel “Mitten Menorah” for collecting mittens, hats, and other warm items. The collection was donated to the party’s host facility, Wellstone Center’s Neighborhood House.

High Holiday Collections

Hallie Q Brown Community Center gratefully received 124 pounds of groceries and other items donated at Or Emet’s High Holiday services.

To become more involved in Or Emet’s Social Justice/Social Action Committee, contact co-chairs Arty Dorman arty@oremet.org or Claire Press clairehpress@aol.com.

SJ/SA committee meeting details on page 14

Reminder

We collect personal care items for clients at Listening House, a St. Paul day facility for homeless people. Items include hotel-size soap and shampoo, toothbrushes, women’s sanitary products, empty prescription bottles (used to disperse hand lotion), etc.

Donations are gratefully accepted at all Friday, Saturday, and Sunday programs.
A Night to Remember
by Margo Fox

It was a night to remember. The setting was festive and everyone was ready to party and to celebrate our leaders, members, and the 30th Anniversary of Or Emet’s relationship with the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

Following wine, hors d’oeuvres, and a lovely Havdalah service led by Eva Cohen, we enjoyed a scrumptious Or Emet dinner — potluck at its finest!

Then, donning the stovepipe hat of Abraham Lin-cohen, David Fox ceremoniously delivered the following:

**Celebratory Address of 2018/5779**

*One score and ten years ago,*

Harold Londer and Larry Garfin

*brought forth in Minnesota a new congregation,*

*conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that one can think rationally while honoring Judaism.*

*Now we are engaged in a great celebration,*

*in testament to the fact that such a congregation can long endure ~ and grow ~ and flourish.*

*We have gathered to remember and to applaud the vision and the efforts of our past,*

*our happiness in the present,*

*and our commitment to the future of Or Emet Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism.*

**Past/Current Presidents:**

Harold Londer, Michael Persellin, Phillip Griffin, Margo Fox, Richard Logan,
Janet Mayer & Lisa Gardner-Springer, Janet Mayer & Anna Burnstein-Gillette, Scott Chazdon

Highlighting the evening was the honoring of Harold Londer, Or Emet’s co-founder and inspiring leader for more than three decades. Memories and words of praise were shared by Muriel Sterne, Faith Oremland, Janet Mayer, and Arty Dorman. Joan Barnett then dramatically unveiled a portrait of Harold that was painted by Susan Weinberg and presented it to him along with a book of his writings titled, “In His Words.”

Lionel Davis was honored for giving Or Emet years of beautiful, creative music. Amy Stubenhaus highlighted Lionel’s contributions along with his wit, charm, and warmth, and presented him with a token of our esteem.

There were also congratulatory messages from SHJ’s Rabbi Miriam Jerris and Executive Director, Paul Golin, who was with us throughout the special weekend.

Rounding out the evening were rousing kazoo-playing toasts to each of us for:

~ our sense of humor and joyfulness
~ the courage of our convictions
~ being caring - and acting on our caring
~ supporting our children’s learning
~ valuing and celebrating diversity
~ having integrity - believing in the power of human effort and responsibility
~ volunteering our time and talents and staying sane in a crazy world!

We all sang “Thirty Years” to the tune of “Sixteen Tons.” It was great, if we do say so ourselves!

Celebration Committee
Margo and David Fox, Anne Handley, Joan Barnett
Amy Stubenhaus, Rich Sonenblum
Reflecting on Thirty Years: A Wall of Wondering Jews
by Scott Chazdon and Susan Weinberg

On a Sunday in September, fifty Or Emet members reflected together on our organization’s past.

We paired participants for three different discussions:

- personal connections to Or Emet
- organizational development milestones
- challenge or change points in our history

People wrote what they heard in their interviews on large sticky notes. There was great energy in the room. This process is actually a facilitation method known as the Wall of Wonder Historical Scan.

We created a huge timeline along the wall of the Talmud Torah gym and people posted what they discussed on the timeline. During the weeks after the session, Scott typed up all the post-it notes into a mind mapping software and created a huge poster to share at Or Emet’s 30th anniversary celebration. Many wonderful insights, from personal to organizational, emerged during the session. Here are just a few:

Personal connections

- Opportunity to contribute without a personal Jewish history
- Intellectual topics and people
- Appreciate the secular approach to Judaism; I want tradition but not religion
- I don’t know if I would have stayed in Minnesota if not for Or Emet!
- Warm and welcoming community; felt a sense of belonging with like-minded people
- Like inquiring and questioning authority
- I could feel good about being Jewish without the religious baggage
- Love this group because it encourages debate

Organizational development milestones

- Or Emet’s early leaders became acquainted with Humanistic Judaism in the late ‘70s when Rabbi Wine was a featured guest speaker at the First Unitarian Society
- Beginning of Jewish Cultural School in the mid 1990s — started out in members’ homes
- Early communications milestones such as moving the newsletter online
- Harold Londer becoming a Madrikh
- Professionalizing the school and beginning to pay staff
- Moving out of private spaces (members’ homes) into more public spaces (University of MN Hillel, Friends School of Minnesota, St. Paul Talmud Torah, Minneapolis Sabes JCC)
- Beginning of a formal B’Mitzvah program in 2014
- Harold Londer’s retirement
- Eva Cohen’s Rabbinic training

Change/Challenge Points

- Establishing Or Emet’s identity in the larger Twin Cities Jewish community
- Paying people for roles, such as public relations and school director, that had previously been volunteer
- JCS curriculum conflict led to some families leaving
- Developing the website so people can find us
- Right-sizing membership
- Organizing volunteer tasks so we don’t keep reinventing the wheel
- Returning some programs to member homes?

Behind each of these bullet points is a deeper story of historical milestones.

Next, we will write a grant to build on what we’ve learned. We hope to conduct interviews and gather documents to create a history of Or Emet, with materials to be held at the Berman Jewish Archives at UMN. We also will draw on the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest to learn more of how other Jewish organizations document their history. If you are a history buff, we’d love to get you involved in this effort!
Living in Two Worlds: Being Jewish in a Christian Culture
by Susan Weinberg

So often being Jewish in a Christian culture is defined by otherness. When I grew up everyone decorated their home at Christmas. Everyone but us. As nighttime approached and the lights came on, our house was the only one that remained dark, the Jewish house.

My parents struggled with how to raise us so we didn't feel left out. At Christmas they made a mild concession. They let us hang a stocking. Then they began to feel a bit guilty and decided they had to stop this before it got baked into a tradition. This was complicated by the fact that we believed in Santa. Their solution was to go directly to the man. They called Santa at the North Pole to tell him we were Jewish and that he must have stopped at our house in error. My brother and I were not bothered in the least by these ill-gotten gifts and screamed in the background for them not to tell him.

As a young Jew I was often outside looking in as I helped friends paint Easter eggs and decorate their tree. I remember a drawing I did as a child. The assignment was to draw Christmas and I drew a Christmas tree. I stood next to it, but behind me was a dresser. Each drawer had a handle shaped like a Star of David. Some part of me was hidden in that chest. I am intrigued by the way I covertly asserted my heritage, a hidden Jew of sorts.

On a trip to Madrid, I was reminded of that drawing when I saw a chest with Stars of David on each drawer. I wondered what stories filled those drawers.

In the Reform temple in which I grew up, we had a comparative religion class where we attended different churches and learned about their beliefs. I was appalled at the idea of dogma. Why would you ever accept a belief as absolute? It was a foreign concept to me, for questioning was clearly encouraged in my family. Even in my confirmation class we debated if God existed and if so in what form. The rabbi led the discussion and it felt like the ultimate in questioning. I think it was then that I decided I could be Jewish.

Throughout life, my relationship to Judaism has ebbed and flowed. Like many American Jews, I live in dual worlds, yet the fundamental aspect of Judaism that spoke to me as a teen still resonates. I need to be free to question, to challenge and to explore. I am grateful to be part of a heritage that gives me the room to do so.

It is also great to be officially admitted to the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism’s rabbinic program. My current rabbinic class, which focuses on Jewish calendar, holidays, liturgy, and celebration, began in October and runs through May. The instructor, Rabbi Adam Chalom, has designed the course to be a stimulating mixture of studying holiday and liturgical history while also thinking deeply about current and future Humanistic Jewish holiday practice.

Acting as ritual leader for this congregation continues to be an honor and to offer a unique opportunity for putting the things I am learning into practice. It felt good to lead the High Holidays services for the second season, building on the previous year’s experiences instead of starting completely fresh. The fall also brought several new rabbi-in-training “firsts,” including speaking on my first panel, ably facilitated by Paul Golin during his October visit to Or Emet. I appreciate the support and inspiration offered by this community; you all energize me to make our services and celebrations feel as relevant, meaningful, and moving as possible. I look forward to continuing to learn and grow with you in 2019!
The following presentations by Or Emet members were featured at Or Emet’s 2018 High Holiday services. These original commentaries offer members’ unique perspectives and are an enduring and meaningful congregational tradition.

By Ian Zukor

Many people here grew up as traditional Jews and later transitioned into Humanistic Judaism. When Rosh Hashanah arrives you probably think about what you used to do on this holiday, attending services and making amends for past mistakes. I’ve always been a Humanistic Jew, so I really have not had a traditional Rosh Hashanah experience. I’ve never been to an all-day service, fasted on Yom Kippur, or looked deeply into the Torah’s passages.

So what is the Jewish new year to me? — Dipping apples in honey, thinking about resolutions, and Mr. Gladen’s incredible shofar abilities. While these traditions have ties to traditional Judaism, they have become Or Emet traditions. Our traditions may be different, but they are meaningful. There is a quote from a rabbi named Mordecai Kaplan that goes “the past has a vote, not a veto.” This means just because we weren’t able to do something in the past, doesn’t mean we can’t do it in the future. We need to take aspects of our traditions and connect them to our own modern lives and ideas.

The High Holidays are a time to slow down and think. We’re all busy people, and it is important to take advantage of the opportunity to reflect. The story is that God is going to decide if we live or die or get sick in this next year. As a humanist, I believe in the power of people. New years bring resolutions, a promise to yourself that always seems to fade quickly. So how can we really dictate how our year goes? For starters we need to take more than just once a year on the High Holidays to slow down and reflect. Reflecting can be getting out in nature, meditating, listening to music, reading, or anything that allows you to appreciate life and the world around you.

In order to have a Shana Tova or a good year, we need to celebrate human power and dignity. Perhaps the most important thing we can do to make this a better year is to be activists.

All around the world Jews are attending services, praying for a good year. But humanists are acting for a good year through things like tzedakah. We all recognize there are injustices, but more than recognizing them, we need to speak out and act against them. I’m 16, so I often feel like I’m only a high school kid who has no say in things. And as one of the younger members of the congregation, it can be intimidating to put myself out there. As with everyone else here, I can’t wait around. I’m not magically going to have my opinion validated when I turn 18. I need to begin to speak my opinion today, and if we can all promise to do that in this next year, real change can happen.

I encourage each of you to be a shoulder for people to lean on in this new year. We have a community here with many different perspectives. This congregation needs to hear everyone speak out. Whether you choose to speak out against racism, classism, sexism, or any ism, this congregation needs to hear everyone’s voice. We have the ability to make change and to be a community willing to help.

While our world today certainly has many issues that need to be addressed, it’s easy to see the world with a sort of fatalistic viewpoint. Throughout history there have always been problems such as drugs or racism, but as long as people like us continue to speak out against these things, the world is in good hands.

My generation is being passed a world with issues just as your generation was, and in this new year we will continue to push for a more accepting and loving world. It is easy to focus on all the negativity around us, but if we put genuine effort year-round into acting against hate and injustice, our future ahead is very bright.
In traditional Judaism, the ten days following Rosh Hashanah are when you are inscribed in the Book of Life. Yom Kippur is when the book is sealed. Thus God determines who shall live and who shall die in the upcoming year. That’s somber stuff.

So we have, according to the Bible, those ten days to own the harm we have done, apologize and seek forgiveness from those we have wronged, coming to terms with God and conscience.

As a secular humanist, I have a slightly different take.

Kol Nidre

Growing up, there were two things I could always count on when fall rolled around. My mother would declare, “It’s always hot for the High Holidays,” no matter what the weather forecast was, and she would admonish me to, “Make sure you dress up for Kol Nidre.”

Kol Nidre had a special place in her religious lexicon as the “holiest of holies.” She considered it as a special prayer to God. Kol Nidre is not a prayer, nor is it addressed to God. But we’ll get to that.

My mother was raised Orthodox, one of twelve children. My father, whose parents escaped a Russian pogrom, had little background in organized religion. We did not keep a kosher home, but we were not allowed to partake of pork or shellfish at home — except for bacon, that is. My father loved bacon. Someplace along the line my mother found that she loved lobster and shrimp, so that was okay in restaurants, but not in the home. If you think this was somewhat confusing to me — you’re absolutely right.

In addition, I have been a skeptic as far back as I can remember. As a child during the Holocaust, I saw relatives go off to war or grieved for relatives I’d never met, slain in places with strange names such as Babi Yar. I was always conscious that religion played a big role in all this. Plus, I was fascinated as a student by the myths surrounding religion.

I always questioned how HE could allow such things to happen, if HE was paying attention. My mother would react by saying, “Pfft Pfft,” and gesturing with her fingers as if to blow my words away. “Don’t talk like that. God knows what He is doing; everything for a reason.” My father remained largely uninvolved in these conversations… as long as he had his bacon.

Which brings us back to Kol Nidre — I enjoy the chant as a beautiful, relaxing piece of music, that I could easily listen to more than twice a year. According to text, and some famous rabbis, in the Middle Ages throughout much of Europe, Jews were forced to convert either to Christianity or to Islam upon pain of death.

Many of these forced converts wanted to return to Judaism, but they were forced to swear allegiance and make vows to other religions. Since Jewish tradition placed such a high priority on verbal promises, what were they to do? Thus came Kol Nidre, a legal formula where the Jews were able to return to Judaism by absolving themselves of vows made under duress.

You look back over the preceding year, under the eye of God, but not to Him, and pray to absolve yourself of conduct which you engaged in, which you regret; you make a compact with yourself, in effect, to be a better person, and not repeat the offensive conduct. This has nothing to do with absolving wrongs and getting forgiveness for what you have done to others — you must deal with them directly and seek your absolution from those you wronged. You must do teshuva, atone and repent.

How, then, to translate this to secular Judaism? To me, the message is not one of religion, but rather, self-reflection or introspection. What can I do to improve myself in the coming year? What traits or acts do I want to avoid? What can I do to make the world a better place? And if there is someone I have wronged, do I have the strength to ask forgiveness from that person?

At least to me, that’s how I can translate Kol Nidre into my skeptical, atheistic life. Or am I an agnostic? I’m never quite sure, but either way I know I enjoy a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich.
In His Words — a collection of historical photos and articles
by Joan Barnett

Since 1983, when Drs. Harold Londer and Larry Garfin founded The Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, local Humanistic Jews have had a home. Following Larry’s untimely death in 1993, Harold has been dedicated to guiding Or Emet with leadership and vision while serving as Or Emet’s Madrikh (ritual officiant). Now, Harold has retired from lead responsibilities and transitioned into a Madrikh Emeritus role.

Over the years, one of Harold’s important contributions was his timely, thought-provoking Madrikh Messages that anchored each issue of The Illuminator. These (often timeless) uniquely valuable articles deserve to be collected and preserved for history. With that goal, Susan Weinberg and I collaborated to produce In His Words. Susan’s painting of Harold created the perfect book cover and gift portrait. Additionally, the book contains many photos documenting Harold’s impactful Or Emet involvement.

In His Words is available for purchase
$18 — below cost — for members only
$36 — covers cost of printing
$54 — includes a small donation

To order a print copy, send a check to Sharon Miller, 4316 Aries Court, Eagan, MN 55123
**Your Choice: Taxes or Charity?**
by Susan Weinberg

Every time I check my mail these days there is an invite to a meal with a pitch from a financial adviser. I’m at that age where financial planning begins to intensify. This has me thinking about what I want my money to do, especially in regard to the charities I support.

Now I took all the usual advice of saving and diversifying and invested money in 401Ks, eventually rolling them to IRAs. A few years back my financial advisor directed my attention to decisions that I’ll need to consider down the road. At 70½ I will need to begin to draw that money out of those IRAs. With that required annual minimum distribution (RMD) comes the unpleasant reality of taxes. I remind myself to embrace gratitude. In the scheme of things, it is not the worst problem one could have. The government has let me keep that money invested without taxes and in time they will collect their due.

Given the choice of dollars going to the IRS or charities, I opt for charities every time. Fortunately when we reach 70½, we have an option available called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). A QCD works for those who will not need the full amount of their required distribution and have charities they want to support. Rather than pay taxes on all of that RMD, they can advise their financial advisor that they would like to have the firm cut checks to charities. Now this is especially valuable under the new tax law that makes it harder to get the benefit of itemizing deductions. *You don’t need to itemize to use this.*

Adjusted gross income affects how much of your Social Security benefits could be taxable and can expose you to a Medicare surtax. A QCD allows you to reduce the number on which these charges are based by the amount of your contribution.

I plan to make use of this option to support Or Emet and other charities with which I am involved. Please note that this is not presented as individual tax advice. If you think this may be appropriate to your financial and tax position, I encourage you to speak with your financial advisor about your specific situation to evaluate if this strategy is appropriate for you.

---

**Donations**

**In memory of — Greg Londer**, brother of Harold Londer
Mark and Lynn Hochhauser

**In memory of — Toby Stahl**, mother of Carrie Dickson
David and Margo Fox

**In memory of — Evelyn Lessin**
David and Joan Barnett
David and Margo Fox
Arty and Coleen Dorman

**In Celebration of the Or Emet community and its leadership for the past 30 years**
David and Margo Fox

**In appreciation of Sharon Miller’s decade-plus as Or Emet treasurer**
Alan Miller
David and Joan Barnett
“Ain’t That Peculiar?: The Judeo-Christian Tradition in the United States *
by Howard Schneider

What’s with the phrase “Judeo-Christian values?” Look, you don’t put mayonnaise on a pastrami sandwich. Enough said? No, because in current usage it’s a manipulative and malevolent phrase.

The idea that the United States was founded on shared Judeo-Christian ideals began in the 1930s and 1940s in response to the rise of Nazi Germany and anti-Semitism. At the time it was a rather benign political statement to say publicly that Jews are a legitimate part of our country.

The phrase also had a purpose during the Cold War era to contrast our nation to godless communists. Public usage subsided for a while, but arose again with a new meaning in the 1980s with the emergence of the religious right… those familiar names like Jerry Falwell, Pat Buchanan, and Ralph Reed. More recently, many Republican politicians proudly claim that United States foundational documents reflect our Judeo-Christian heritage.

When politicians and clergy explain what they mean, you find right-wing, conservative viewpoints.

• Pat Buchanan, “… our Judeo-Christian values are going to be preserved… and not dumped on some landfill called multiculturalism.”

• Rev. Richard Lee, “… the Judeo-Christian Bible as the basis for a civilized society… marriage has been defined as the holy union between one man and one woman.”

• Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, “Judeo-Christian values are the underpinning of Western civilization.”

The concept itself is bogus and historically inaccurate. Let’s examine three of our nation’s foundational values and ideas from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament:

• Freedom of speech: Leviticus — those who blaspheme the name of the Lord should be put to death. Mark— if you blaspheme the Lord, eternal damnation results.

• Democracy: Deuteronomy — I will have a king over me. Romans — there is no power but God and those who resist are damned.

• Liberty: Leviticus — both bondmen and bondwomen shall be your possession. Ephesians — servants are to be obedient to their masters with fear and trembling and husbands are heads of the wife as Christ is of the church.

In sum, the important values of freedom, democracy and liberty are derived more from the secular Enlightenment than from bible passages. Those who use this empty-headed notion about foundational Judeo-Christian values promote phony consensus and values antithetical to our Humanistic Jewish values.

It’s pablum better tossed into a compost pile.

Or Emet’s Passover Seder
In the Humanistic Tradition

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, April 20, 2019 at 5:00 pm
at First Unitarian Society, 900 Mt Curve Ave, Mpls
Nominal fee and everyone contributes to the potluck
Watch for publicity about the Seder and reservation timeline
Reservations are required and capacity is limited

12
SHABBAT PROGRAMS
Programs meet at the Sabes Jewish Community Center, 4330 South Cedar Lake Rd, St. Louis Park. The programs include a brief Humanistic Shabbat service and Oneg reception.

Friday Programs are at 7:30 PM.
Saturday Programs are at 10:00 AM.

Saturday, January 12 at 10:00 am
Program: Voice to Vision
Survivors of genocide in Vietnam and Colombia share their stories orally and in mixed media art
Presenters: David Feinberg, Professor of Art at UMN and his award-winning Voice to Vision team.

Saturday, February 9 at 10:00 am
Program: Remnants of Diaspora Synagogues in Greece and Syria: Windows Into Ancient Jewish Diversity
Presenter: Eva Cohen, Or Emet’s ritual leader, rabbinic student at International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism, graduate student in Near Eastern Studies at University of MN, and visual artist

Friday, March 8 at 7:30 pm
Program: The American Political System: Is it Working?
Presenter: Eric Black, MinnPost journalist, former StarTribune writer

Friday, April 5 at 7:30 pm
Program: Coming Together, Coming Apart: Spiritual Geographies in My Art
Presenter: Susan Armington will show her map paintings of the Middle East made with ancient texts, as well as excerpts from other work.

Friday, May 3 at 7:30 pm
Program: Jewish Gangsters in America
About organized Jewish gangsters operating in large and medium-sized cities during the 20th century
Presenter: Howard Schneider, Or Emet member and retired social science researcher

SUNDAY PROGRAMS
Sunday programs are at the St. Paul Talmud Torah, 768 Hamline Ave. South, St. Paul.
Adult programs meet from 10:00 am -12:30 pm (concurrently with Jewish Cultural School classes).

January 20
Program: Circumspection about (Male) Circumcision
In modern times, is this action an uncritical tradition or is there a logical, Humanistic Judaic reason for it?
Discussion leader: Bruce Pomerantz, Or Emet member

February 17
Program: Strengthening Kehillah: A discussion of the Hebrew concept of Kehillah (community), our own experiences in Kehillah, and ideas for strengthening a sense of community at Or Emet
Facilitator: Scott Chazdon, Or Emet President, sociologist and evaluation specialist, University of MN

March 17
Program: Living with Different - not Dis - Abilities: Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion
Presenters:
Gwyn Leder, Or Emet member, lives with a brain injury
Lori Leder-Fogel, proud parent of an adult daughter with autism, activist, and member of the Jewish Inclusion Collaborative Community

April 14
Program: Weaving Together Yiddish Music and Stories: Individuals who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save innocent people.
Presenter: Naye Strunes Klezmer Quartet

May 19
Program and presenter to be announced

Music and Stories By the Naye Strunes Klezmer Quartet
A Benefit for Doctors Without Borders

Presenting
~ Klezmer music and stories of fearless individuals during the Holocaust
~ An opportunity to reflect on courage and compassion during dark times

Or Emet Sunday program
April 14, 2019 10:00 am - 12:00 noon
St. Paul Talmud Torah
Special Events and Meetings | January - June 2019

Social Justice/Social Action Committee meetings
Thursday | January 17, March 14, May 16 | 4:30 - 6:00 pm | St. Paul JCC
Sunday | February 17 and April 14 | 12:15 pm | St. Paul Talmud Torah | following the Sunday program
For more information, contact co-chairs Arty Dorman arty@oremet.org or Claire Press clairehpress@aol.com.

Saturday, January 26 and April 27 | 7:00 - 8:30 pm | St. Stephen’s Shelter dinner(s)
In the spirit of tikkun olam, Or Emet volunteers provide and serve dinner to shelter guests. Or Emet members and friends, including children over 8 years old, are invited to participate. Watch your inbox for signup details.

Saturday, March 23 | 12:30 - 2:30 pm | Second Harvest Heartland | 7101 Winnetka Ave. N. | Brooklyn Park
A volunteer opportunity for families — children over 8 years are welcome.

Sunday, April 14 | 10:00 am - 12:00 noon | Music and Stories By the Naye Strunes Klezmer Quartet
A special program while JCS classes are in session — at St. Paul Talmud Torah. Details on pg 13.

Saturday, April 20 | Humanistic Passover Seder | 5:00 - 8:00 pm | at The First Unitarian Society | details on pg 12

Sunday, June 2 | Annual Meeting and Picnic
Lake Nokomis Community Center | 2401 East Minnehaha Parkway | Minneapolis
• Annual Meeting with election of officers 10:00 am - 12:00 noon
• Potluck Picnic 12:00 noon – 2:00 pm