

TEMPLE BETH SHALOM

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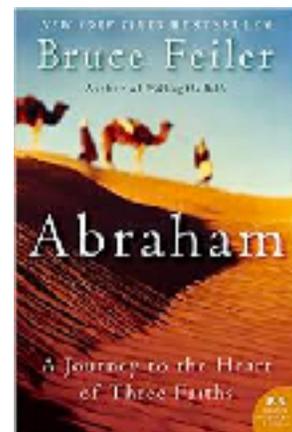
Temple Board of Directors

Temple Member
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Temple Beth Shalom
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From the Bimah: Our Rabbi's Message

Rabbi Dennis Jones



Abraham—A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths

I vividly remember the day that I heard about the brutal murders at the Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015. I was shaken to my core. Shortly after that horrific act, it was reported on the news that the murderer, whose name I will not honor by mentioning it, had done this evil deed in an effort to spark a “race war.” I reacted with every fiber of my being. As I sat on my couch watching the newscast that night, I clenched my fist and vowed that I would strive with every bit of strength that I had to work to promote unity among people of different races, among people of different religions, among people of different nationalities. I committed myself to strive to tear down those artificial barriers which have separated humankind for centuries, and to put in their place bonds of friendship and, yes, even love.

In the months leading up to June 2015, Barbara Laufer and I had been in discussions with several local spiritual leaders about organizing a local interfaith group in the Catawba Valley along the lines of the well-known Mecklenburg Ministries interfaith organization in Charlotte, North Carolina. Over the next two years we were able to successfully put together such an organization, establishing rules for membership, constitution and bylaws, and acquiring 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. I have had the privilege of serving on the Catawba Valley Interfaith Council (CVIC) Board of Directors since the organization's inception. Since June 2017, and it has been my great honor to serve as its president.

One of the many community activities that the Catawba Valley interfaith Council has sponsored was a February 2018 book reading and interfaith discussion by four local spiritual leaders: a Rabbi, an Imam, a Pastor, and a professor of religion. The book we chose to read and discuss was Bruce Feiler's *Abraham-A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths*. That book is Feiler's attempt to foster Interfaith dialogue and cooperation through the establishment of a common anchor, the patriarch Abraham.

Now I am a chronic optimist. I believe in the words of the Hebrew prophets when they say, "Then they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore. In that day every person will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, with none to make them afraid" (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3-4). As we pray in the modern Jewish liturgy, "I am a Jew because Israel places humanity and its unity above the nations and above Israel itself" (*Mishkan T'filah*, CCAR 2007, p. 203), I do believe that time will come, as we pray in the *Aleinu*, "O may all, created in your image, become one in spirit and one in friendship..." (*Mishkan*, p. 289). In his book entitled *Abraham*, Feiler explores the possibility that it may just be this one biblical figure, so central to each of the three major Western faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, that has the historical credibility and depth to bring these faiths together.

Feiler starts off his book with a brief overview of the life of Abraham, summarized from Biblical sources. He delves in each of the major religions' view of Abraham. Now Feiler is not a theologian, so his assessment of each religion's development of Abraham is brutally honest. I know that I, as a progressive Jewish rabbi, enjoyed reading Feiler's assessment of Judaism's view of Abraham, blemishes and all. One of the topics Feiler treated most bluntly is a topic that I have remarked on many times myself. That is, how the rabbis of the late second Temple period, once they realized that Rome was about to destroy the nation and the Temple, began to re-interpret Scripture in such a way as to convey the *individual importance* of keeping Torah. In their effort to reinforce the antiquity of the moral code they were promoting, the rabbis of this period gave novel interpretations to ancient passages that sometimes undermined the validity of the plain meaning of the text. In addition to that, those same rabbis' own commentaries were regarded more and more highly to the point their weight may have begun to equal or even exceed the weight of the Torah as written. This concept has become widely known as the "Oral Torah." Now, as a progressive Jew, that idea is not offensive to me. I understand that the ancient writings must be constantly

reinterpreted in the light of changing societal needs and new historical and scientific discoveries. I believe that the Torah, similar to the United States Constitution, is true enough and sound enough to endure that modernization without weakening its validity or authority.

I must share, however, that one of my very good friends, who is an evangelical Christian pastor, shared with me that he took great offense at the way Feiler handled Scripture and tradition in his book, *Abraham*. Feiler argues that once the Jewish rabbis opened the door to scriptural reinterpretation and the elevation of commentary to a level of scriptural authority, the Christian writers and commentators used this same approach to advocate their own interpretations of the Scripture and to establish their own traditions. They, of course, were followed soon by Muslim interpreters. It is true, I suppose, as Feiler notes in his discussion, that most religions would not want to admit that their views have evolved over time or in reaction to external forces (*Abraham*, p. 131).

Following the brief overview of each religion's view of Abraham, which, as noted, explained each faith's methods of historical and scriptural understanding, Feiler begins a brief study of the history of interfaith activities. The Parliament of the World's Religions is widely regarded as the beginning of the interfaith movement. It was the idea of Charles Bonney, who proposed inviting representatives from each of the world's major religions to a convocation to be held at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. This was followed quickly by several major world interfaith organizations in the early 20th century: the World Missionary Conference (1910), the World Congress of Faiths (1933), and the World Council of Churches (1948). Feiler points out that by the "start of the 21st century, the idea that one religion was going to extinguish the others was deader than it had been in two thousand years.... A new type of religious interaction was needed, involving not just swords, plowshares, and the idea of triumph, but conversation, interaction, and the idea of pluralism" (*Abraham*, p. 195).

Feiler contends, quoting Walter Brueggeman, the well-known theologian from Georgia's Columbia Theological Seminary, that it is "perfectly legitimate" for Christians, Jews, and Muslims to draw their own meaning from history and tradition. "It is not legitimate for Christians or anyone else to presume that theirs is the only direction" (*Abraham*, p. 201). Needless to say, not everyone welcomes this assessment. Feiler notes that according to Brueggeman and other scholars, "the percentage of believers who would agree to the principle of spiritual parity among the faiths probably totals around two-thirds of Jews, half of Christians, and a third of Muslims (p. 202). Another problem with interfaith dialogue, according to Feiler, is that it often results in "bland paeans to loving one's neighbor" or striving toward some mystical "spiritual oneness." Feiler quotes Harvard's Jon Levenson who says, "90 percent of interfaith dialogue is bunk" (p. 203).

What Feiler advocates, on the basis of the scholars he consulted, is that a new type of conversation is needed—one that does not minimize differences but accentuates them. Feiler believes the leaders of interfaith initiatives need more than just "mandates and dictums." He proposes a "common source." That source for Feiler is, of course, Abraham. Feiler reveals that he found in Abraham his own personal anchor. He states, "I needed to believe that loving God, that being

prepared to sacrifice for that belief, and that believing in peace had not somehow become incompatible.... *I needed Abraham* (Italics mine, p. 215).

It is not, as Feiler maintains, that Abraham is a perfect vessel for interfaith reconciliation, “but he is the best vessel we’ve got.” Abraham is, after all, the root of the common heritage of the three major western religions. In many respects, Abraham’s descendants have become as numerous as the stars. And yet, I agree with Feiler when he says that Abraham’s greatest contributions may still be in the future. “Abraham is the seed of hope” (p. 226). If you believe, as I do, that interfaith dialogue, understanding, and cooperation is a necessary step toward the eradication of fear and hate and toward the establishment of peace, friendship, and even love in our communities, then this book is a must-read. Won’t you get your copy today, and let me know what you think?

The President’s Message

Barbara Laufer, President

Auschwitz was liberated in January of 1945, and survivors are becoming fewer and fewer as years go by and the memory is fading. In the U.S. 41% of all Americans and 66% of millennials don’t know what the Auschwitz death camp was. The attacks on Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh and the Chabad synagogue in Poway are not isolated incidents. According to the ADL since 2004 anti-Semitic incidents have increased every year and this increase parallels an increase in extremist activities. If you look back at the lead-up to the Holocaust, it started with just bullying and scapegoating, with jokes and propaganda. What starts out this way can eventually create a more dangerous world.

Many synagogues are becoming much more security conscious and some are beginning to charge fees in addition to membership to provide security services. We are indeed blessed to have had David Cohen bequeath Temple Beth Shalom a very generous amount, some of which has been used to renovate the temple, and some to provide funds to activate a security committee and provide committee members with essential training to protect the membership. The result of these efforts has made, and will continue to make, our temple a hard target.

On a much lighter note, **Save the date of April 9, 2020 for our annual Seder**, the reservation form will be emailed shortly and will appear in the back of the March Bulletin.

Hosts for the Rest of the Year

Listed below are board members who have volunteered to host at temple services, but we also need additional member volunteers. Hosts' responsibilities are identified below and if you are willing to volunteer, please email Mary Lee Tosky at marylee.tosky@gmail.com and put TBS Hosting in the subject line. Or use this link to sign up <https://bit.ly/2t9uEPH>. Thank you.

February 14-15	Susan Goldstein	hosts needed
March 9 (Purim Party)	Kathy Jones	hosts needed
March 20-21	Aaron & Mary Lee Tosky	Maria & Andy Rieder
April 9 (Seder)	Sisterhood	
April 17-18	TBD	hosts needed
May 15-16	Lin Gentry	Tiffany Hull
May 29 (Erev Shavuot)	TBD	hosts needed
June 19-20	TBD	hosts needed
July 17-18	TBD	hosts needed

Shabbat & Holiday Hosts' Responsibilities

(revised July 2018)

Please consider pairing with board member(s) to host a weekend at Temple Beth Shalom. It is hoped that by members contributing to the life of our synagogue in this way, we will all feel a part of our Jewish community and an active participant in assuring its well-being. This list will hopefully take away the guess work and please remember that all members present will be helping you in any way possible. Your volunteerism is greatly appreciated.



Prior to the Rabbi/Holiday Weekend:

The host(s) should communicate with each other regarding who will do which responsibilities. The host board member should make sure that someone has a key for opening the Temple to make preparations.

Friday Evening Oneg:

1. Three tables are set up with table cloths. One side table should be for coffee, challah, and wine/ juice for a congregational Kiddush. Two tables should be set up with plates, napkins, silverware, and desserts.
2. Hosts should supply desserts. Challah, coffee, cream, sugar, wine, juice, sodas, and ice should already be stocked in the kitchen, but hosts should check for them ahead of time and let the Board know if supplies are not there.

3. Female hosts should set up the Shabbat candles, and perform the lighting of candles when the Rabbi directs. Hosts should also make sure that the yahrtzeit and ner tamid lights are lit prior to services.
4. Near the middle of the Friday evening service, hosts should brew coffee, pour Kiddush cups, and make sure the challah and desserts are set out (desserts and challah can be put out and kiddush cups filled before the service).
5. After the service, the hosts should assist with distributing wine/juice to the congregation.
6. At the end of the evening, hosts should complete host inventory; store all left-overs; clean the kitchen; sweep floor; and take out the trash. Recyclables should be separated into the recycling bin.
7. The host board member should ensure that the Temple is locked up for the evening and a security check done when you get there and when you leave.

Shabbat Morning:

Sabbath morning activities are minimal. Paid kitchen personnel will prepare the food and set-up and clean-up. At the end of the luncheon, they will also gather tablecloths for laundering and take garbage/recycle to the street.

Host couples only need to help with setting up tables and chairs and putting on tablecloths and distributing wine/juice for Kiddush.

TBS Sisterhood

Lin Gentry, Sisterhood President

Thank you to those who braved the weather and came out to our last Movie Night at temple in January. There were 13 of us watching the classic spoof, Galaxy Quest.

Don't forget to let us know if you want to be president or treasurer next year.

Here's what else we have coming up. Hope to see you!

Wednesday, **February 19th**-6:30pm-Hickory Station restaurant-next monthly meeting. Bring titles of books you've read to share with others or ones you'd like to read.

Sunday, **March 1st**-10am-temple-bake hamentaschen for college students and mature members of our congregation. I have an address of one college student —are there any more who'd like a package of hamentaschen in the mail at school?? Send me their address. Bring dough already made, fillings and other baking supplies.



Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund



The Harriet Sederholm Scholarship Fund was established by a long-standing Temple member, Burt Sederholm, to honor his wife Harriet, who died shortly after her retirement after 25 years with the Catawba County Department of Social Services. Mr. Sederholm's efforts provided the initial funding from generous family members and friends and it has been added to over the years. The scholarship is available to students. Temple members are looked upon favorably, but one does not need to be a temple member nor Jewish to apply. The scholarship fund dividends are used to provide scholarship awards. Candidates may submit an essay to any one of the committee members. The essay will explain who the candidate is, what they are doing currently, what their plans are for the future, how the scholarship funds will be used and, if applicable, what the connection may be to Jewish life.

Interested students should submit their essay by April 30th. The scholarship season runs from May 1-April 30. All applicants will be notified in writing if their application has been approved or declined by May 15th. Awards should be mailed to recipients by May 31st.

The essay should be emailed to any of the committee members: Lin Gentry, Karen Ferguson, or Sandy Guttler. Naturally, the committee encourages everyone to make a tax-deductible donation to the Scholarship Fund at any time

Temple Board



Our next board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 12th, at 7pm. Board meetings are open to all temple members. Please join us and become a part of our TBS family.

TBS Board members are:

Officers:

Barbara Laufer, President
Susan Goldstein, Vice-President
Susan Rieder, Treasurer
Tiffany Hull, Secretary

Members at Large:

Liz Correll
Marion DuBow
Lin Gentry
Amy Hedrick
Linda Greenfield
Mary Lee Tosky
Karen Ferguson
Kathy Jones

Donations

A donation of \$100.00 was made to the Women's Resource Center for the month of February

Do you have a favorite charity you would like us to donate to? Let us know.

Please consider these funds for your next donation:
Building and Grounds Security
Sunday School
Community Relations



Cindy Rose and Stoel Burrows gave a donation with thanks to Rabbi Jones and the TBS congregation for your warmth and kindness at the Baby Naming celebration for Miriam Rose.

Please note that the Purim Celebration will begin on March 9th at 6:30 PM. We will have social time, heavy hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and games followed by the Megillah service at 7:30 PM. All are invited to attend!



Looking for a way to give tzedakah?

Sunday School is collecting winter hats, gloves, scarves, personal/hotel size hygiene supplies, backpacks, and manual can openers for the local homeless population. Please help by bringing these items to temple and placing them in the tote box in the foyer.



TBS Message Board

A shout out to Marion DuBow who is wintering in New Jersey. We miss you Marion!

Happy Birthdays to the Laufers, Barbara (2/1) and Larry (2/11). We appreciate everything you do for us at Temple Beth Shalom

Barbara Laufer sends Congratulations to Ben Setser on being installed as President of the NC Sons of the American Revolution

If you wish to post a message to acknowledge a special event or achievement, condolence, or send a get well message, give or send your message and a \$5 donation to Temple Beth Shalom Message Board, PO Box 9142, Hickory, NC 28603. A greeting card will be sent acknowledging your donation and your message will appear here in the next issue of the TBS Bulletin.



A ring was found in the temple sanctuary. If you think it might belong to you contact Barbara Laufer to claim it.

TBS Member Business Directory

Let us know if you would like to list your business here in the Bulletin. It is a free benefit of TBS membership

Dr. Ronald DuBow
Internist, Geriatric Specialist
(elderly care) Pediatrician
2651 Morganton Blvd SW
Lenoir, NC 28645
828-757-8950

Dr. Laura Faruque
A Woman's View
915 Tate Blvd SE
Suite170
Hickory, NC 28602
828-345-0800

Dr. Mark Faruque
Bethlehem Family Practice
174 Bolick Lane Suite 202
Taylorsville, NC 28681
828-495-8226



Temple Beth Shalom Life Cycle February Events

Birthdays

Barbara Laufer 2/1
Linda Greenfield 2/1
Elaine Zerden 2/3
Tristan Haddock 2/7
Perri Huitt 2/8
Henry Greenfield 2/8
Larry Freiman 2/9

Larry Laufer 2/11
Grayson Weatherly 2/20
Julie Owens 2/21
Nicholas Faruque 2/23
Gavriela Crater 2/24
Maddy Gross 2/24
Sam Gross 2/28

Anniversaries

Yahrzeits

Helmi Berndt 2/18
David Guy 2/21
Sol Taub 2/22

Member Business Directory

Scott and Julie Owens
Taste Full Beans Coffeehouse
29 2nd St NW
Hickory, NC 28601
828-325-0108
www.tastefullbeans.com

Dr David Peltzer
Newton Family Physicians
767 West First Street
Newton, NC 28658
828 465-3928
www.newtonfamilyphysicians.com

Local and Regional Events



Prof. Dr. Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, the director of the renowned Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University Berlin, Germany, will give a lecture entitled "Gender, Sex and Violence: Race Defilement in Nazi Germany." It will take place in **Belk Library** and Information Commons, **Room 114**, on **Thursday, March 26**, from **5:00** until 7:00 pm. Prof. Schüler-Springorum's talk is also the keynote of the Southeast German Studies Workshop that will be held--co-organized by the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies--on the ASU campus on March 26-27. Free and open to the public.

The noted **traveling exhibit "Shoah: How Was it Humanly Possible?"** from **Yad Vashem**, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in Jerusalem will be on display on the first and fourth floors of **Belk Library** and Information Commons from **March 17 until April 17, 2020**. The exhibition examines major historical aspects of the Holocaust, beginning with Jewish life in pre-Holocaust Europe and ending with the liberation of Nazi concentration and extermination camps across the continent and the remarkable return to life of the survivors.

The exhibit comes to ASU as a result of a cooperation between Yad Vashem, the Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Peace Studies, and Belk Library and Information Commons. In light of the renewed rise of anti-Semitism and racial hatred, white supremacy, and deadly terrorist attacks from Halle, Germany, to Pittsburgh, U.S., to Christchurch, New Zealand, the exhibit could not be more timely. The accompanying program includes a visit and presentation by the 1930-born **Holocaust and Auschwitz survivor Dr. Zev Harel**. For more information, contact the Center at 828.262.2311 or holocaust@appstate.edu.



Temple Beth Shalom has an active membership in the Catawba Valley Interfaith Council, where Rabbi Dennis serves as president. You can find out more about this organization and its activities at: <https://www.facebook.com/CVICNC/>.

Schedule for Rabbi Services and Sunday School 2020

Date	Event	Bulletin Deadline
February		
2	Sunday School 10:00am	
14-16	Services (Fri. 7:30pm/Sat. 10:00am)/ Sunday School 10:00am	February 1
March		
9	Purim Megilah Reading 7:30 PM (Monday)	
20-22	Services (Fri. 7:30pm/Sat. 10:00am)/ Sunday School 10:00am	March 7
April		
5	Sunday School 10:00am	
9	Passover Community Seder 6:00 PM (Thursday)	April 4
17-19	Services (Fri. 7:30pm/Sat. 10:00am)/ Sunday School 10:00am	
May		
3	Sunday School 10:00am	
15-17	Services (Fri. 7:30pm/Sat. 10:00am)/ Sunday School 10:00am	May 2
29	Erev Shavuot/Friday Night Service 7:30pm	
31	TBS Annual Membership Meeting 10:00am	
June		
7	Sunday School Final Session 10:00am	
19-20	Services (Fri. 7:30pm/Sat. 10:00am)	June 6
July		
17-18	Services (Fri. 7:30pm/Sat. 10:00am)	N/A

Want to contribute to the TBS Bulletin? Send entries to Karen Ferguson at karen.sederholm@gmail.com. All entries are reviewed by the TBS Board before publication.