Micah story goes high tech

By Shelley Grossman

The Temple Micah story is about to go cyber. The Living History Team has been working quietly since January to develop an interactive, web-based venue to chronicle Micah from the beginning to the present and into the future. After the High Holy Days, the team plans to preview a prototype to illustrate the possibilities of such an undertaking. Preview dates and times are to be announced soon for the prototype, called Temple Micah—A Living History, 1963 to Today.

“The Living History Project is a wonderful opportunity to tell our narrative—from our beginnings to our present, in an appealing digital form that can be forever updated,” explained David Diskin, team captain.

The project and its success, Diskin maintains, depend on the temple community’s participation in providing information, slices of history, videos, photos and anecdotes. Comments, suggestions, critiques are very welcome. The team particularly urges members to point out mistakes and omissions. To facilitate active member involvement, every page of the prototype will have a box to click on to respond.

The project grew out of the work of the Member Recognition Task Force that last January recommended to the temple board efforts to, among other things, find ways to acknowledge and pay tribute to Micah members for the work, often unsung, that they have done and do now to make the temple the special community that it is.

“Temple Micah is 52 years old now and is in danger of losing some of its memories,” Mary Beth Schiffman, recognition task force co-chair, told the board. “It has no official documentation of the people who created Micah and who continue to build the congregation today through contributions of time, energy, creativity, dedication and other resources.”

The new effort will in no way change the synagogue’s “laudable fundamental policy of egalitarianism,” she said. No plaques will decorate the walls. “No member of the community is to receive special respect or exercise undue influence because of personal wealth, prominence or monetary donations to the temple.”

The task force had envisioned some kind of collection of documents, memorabilia, photos, videos, and other artifacts that a temple group—established for the purpose—would carefully curate, edit and vet to avoid a free-for-all community bulletin board. Instead it would produce a carefully edited, coherent temple story.

Diskin immediately took an interest in the project and, being an expert in computers and things digital, came up with the interactive framework for the Living History Project. Soon he was joined by four members who brought varying lengths of Micah experience, and, perhaps more important, expertise in mounting such a project: two professional documentary-makers, Jennifer Gruber and Leslie Sewell; an Emmy-winning television producer, Stu Schwartz; and this reporter, Shelley Grossman, a retired journalist.

The group researched the synagogue’s history, policies, innovations and approaches. For the prototype, so far the team has produced video interviews...
WHY WE CELEBRATE MICAH

BY JODI ENDA

Put on your dancing shoes!
It’s time for a celebration.
Not Rosh Hashanah nor Sukkot,
though those will come first.
Not Hanukkah, though we will strike a match.
It’s time to celebrate our building.

Yeah, I know, that sounds truly boring.
But wait! As of this year, we have been in our building for 20 years. And, what’s more, we are about to pay off the mortgage. (You got it, that’s where the match comes in. We will have a ceremonial mortgage burning!)

So celebrate we will, with a grand party, complete with dancing and other forms of revelry, on the night of Saturday, December 5. Consider this a save-the-date notice.

We have a lot to celebrate. Our lovely plot of land in Northwest DC is our home, a safe place in which we come together to share ideas and passions, emotions and experiences, intellectual discussions and spiritual growth.

Most of us never knew Micah in any other spot. Few of us were there when the congregation was founded, in the fall of 2001. Many of us flocked to Shabbat services a few days after the terrorist attacks, and as I stood with hundreds of people I did not know, crying as we sang “God Bless America,” I felt at home.

This is a place with soul.
The following week, Rabbi Zemel delivered one of the most powerful sermons I have ever heard, putting the attacks in context, intellectually and morally, helping us come to terms with this new, scary, incomprehensible world.

This is a place with brains.
If you lived in Washington in the fall of 2001, you know it was a tense time. Some people moved away, some sealed their houses with duct tape. Others left their mail untouched as anthrax suddenly, horrifyingly felled unsuspecting workers. Tourism dried up. Hotel workers were laid off.

Temple Micah collected rice, tons of it, to help feed people who lost their jobs.

This is a place with compassion.
I came to Temple Micah at a fateful time in our nation’s history, so some dramatic moments stand out. But most of my favorite memories came later.

The music! Always, always, there is beautiful music. Every week, Cantor Meryl Weiner and Music Director Teddy Klaus elevate our worship services with songs that are moving and accessible. (The first thing most new members tell me is that they joined for this reason.)

We have incredible choirs and bands and, as Rabbi Zemel has said of the Torahs that we now have on permanent display in the sanctuary, “These are the memories that are ours. The history that is ours.”

The foundations of Temple Micah were laid, figuratively, in Southwest; the congregation has grown, literally as well as figuratively, in Northwest. We have more than doubled in size—and expanded our building’s footprint to accommodate the larger numbers—and expanded from one rabbi to three.

We also have matured. We are in the vanguard of congregations that are forging a new course for American synagogues, for American Jews. We have a national reputation because we like to experiment, to imagine new ways of doing old things and even new ways of doing new things—and then to do them. We also recognize that we have a lot more to do. We are not done maturing, learning, trying, grasping, inventing and, yes, innovating. I hope we never will be.

But we can celebrate nonetheless. I wasn’t a Micah member when we moved to our current home. But in 14 years, I’ve been around for a lot of highlights.

The first moment I knew, really knew, that I was in the right congregation was the week of September 11, 2001. Many of us flocked to Shabbat services a few days after the terrorist attacks, and as I stood with hundreds of people I did not know, crying as we sang “God Bless America,” I felt at home.

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We have incredible choirs and bands and, once a year, an orchestra to help bring our prayers to life.

But that’s not all. For years, Micah-
HIGH HOLY DAY SERVICES 5776/2015

Unless otherwise indicated, all services held at Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, 3401 Nebraska Ave., NW, Washington DC

Selichot
Saturday, September 5
Oneg 10:30 pm; Service 11 pm, at Temple Micah

Annual Memorial Service
Sunday, September 6
10 am, Temple Micah Cemetery (directions on website)

Erev Rosh Hashanah
Sunday, September 13
Main Service at 8 pm, followed by Oneg
Next Dor 20s/30s service at 6:30 pm at Temple Micah

Rosh Hashanah
Monday, September 14
Main Service at 10:15 am
For Children:
➤ Young Family Service (newborn through 1st grade) 9:15–9:45 am
➤ Children’s Service (grades 2-6) 10:30–11:15 am
➤ Child care and Youth Lounge available (pre-registration required)

Kol Nidre
Tuesday, September 22
Main Service at 8 pm
Next Dor 20s/30s service at 7:30 pm at Temple Micah

Yom Kippur
Wednesday, September 23
Main Service at 10:15 am
For Children:
➤ Young Family service (newborn through 1st grade) 9:15–9:45am
➤ Children’s Service (grades 2-6) 10:30–11:15 am
➤ Child care and Youth Lounge available (pre-registration required)
Ask the Rabbis 1:30–2:45 p.m.
Afternoon Break and 25-Year Club Readings 2:45–3:30 p.m.
Afternoon and Neilah Services 3:30 p.m.
Break the Fast following Neilah service

Wise Aging Groups Launch October 2015

By Harriette Kinberg and the Wise Aging Committee

Would you like to join other Micah members to explore issues of aging, gain insights, and enhance your awareness of the possibilities inherent in today’s unprecedented prolongation of old age?

The Wise Aging program, designed by the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, creates a safe space to explore issues related to aging within a small, trusting community. Neither therapy nor grief counseling, each session uses Jewish and other sources to help us examine this stage of our lives, learn from each other, and share optimism, laughter, tears and new insights.

The program consists of a series of nine workshops based on the book, WISE AGING: Living with Joy, Resilience, & Spirit, by Rabbi Rachel Cowan and Dr. Linda Thal. Topics include:

- What is special about this life stage?
- Life review
- Becoming one’s authentic self
- Developing a positive relationship to our changing bodies
- Revitalizing and nourishing healthy relationships
- Forgiveness and reconciliation
- Cultivating spiritual qualities for well-being
- Learning to live with loss
- Change and death
- Cultivating wisdom
- Leaving a legacy

Starting this fall, Temple Micah will launch three groups: Group schedules will vary, but all groups will cover the same material. Groups will meet: Tuesdays (10 am–noon), Thursdays (1 pm–3 pm), and Sundays (1 pm–3 pm)

Each group is limited to 12 participants and will meet for nine sessions. Each session will include contemplative listening, text study, mindfulness meditation, movement exercises, reflection and journaling. Two facilitators will lead each group. All the facilitators are Micah members who took professional training from the Institute. They are Peg Blechman, Jane Kerschner, Francie Schwartz, Rabbi Herb Schwartz, and Harriett Stonehill.

There is no charge, but all participants must buy the Wise Aging book, priced at $16.95. Participants will be asked to commit to regular attendance, as it is important for members to establish and maintain rapport with each other. If there are more than 36 applicants, participants will be chosen randomly, taking into consideration their preferred meeting times.

To learn more, please come to an information meeting at Micah on Sunday, September 27, from 4–5:30 pm, email wiseaging@templemicah.org, or leave a message at the Temple office for a facilitator to call you. And to register, please visit the temple’s website or submit a paper registration form you’ll find in the Micah lobby.
COMING ATTRACTIONS

Here’s a sampling of Micah activities (beyond High Holy Day-related events) on tap this fall. For a detailed schedule of all upcoming events and services, check out www.templemicah.org.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 • 9:30 AM
Machon Micah: First Sunday of 5776

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
Sukkot Preparation and Celebration
Help build our Sukkah from 10 am to noon; Erev Sukkot Service at 6:30 pm

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2 • 6 PM
Welcome and Installation of Rabbi Susan Landau
With Youth Choir and special guest speaker to be announced. Oneg at 6 pm; service at 6:30 pm.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 • 6 PM
All-community Simchat Torah service

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15 • 9:30 AM
Annual Hanukkah Gift & Crafts Fair, in the Social Hall

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20 • 6 PM
Micah House Shabbat
Oneg at 6 pm; service at 6:30 pm; Community Shabbat Dinner with Micah House panel from 7:30 to 9 pm.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5
20-Year Building Anniversary and Mortgage-Burning Party

INTERESTING SPEAKERS!

Temple Micah features two monthly lecture series—on Sunday morning and Wednesday noon. For more details, go online to www.templemicah.org.

SUNDAY SPEAKER SERIES
Sundays from 10:15 to 11:45 am


November 15 – Former Congressmen Tom Davis and Martin Frost discuss their new book, The Partisan Divide: Congress in Crisis.

LUNCH & LEARN
Wednesdays from noon to 2 pm

A monthly program sponsored by the Aging Together Team. Reserve online at www.templemicah.org. Contact Livia Bardin, lunchandlearn@templemicah.org, or call the temple office, 202-342-9175, for details.

September 9 – Dr. Thomas M. Hyde, on “Mental Illness and Violence.”

October 14 – Livia Bardin, on “The Family of Abraham: A Social Worker’s Perspective.”

Diskin said, “It will also provide a medium for anyone in the congregation to tell their own Micah story.”

TEMPLE MICAH UNDERWEAR DRIVE — 2015

Once again this year, Micah members are invited to donate new underclothing (underwear, bras, t-shirts and socks) to support neighbors in need. (For a detailed list of most requested items, please see the temple’s website.) Just pick up a shopping bag at Rosh Hashanah service—and return it with your donations at Yom Kippur services on Wednesday morning, September 23. The Temple Micah 6th-grade class will count and deliver the items to benefit the clients of Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place.

Mazal Tov to Martha Adler!

The annual Underwear Drive was launched 16 years ago by longtime member Martha Adler, and it has since become the temple’s most important annual mitzvah project. In recognition of her “visionary leadership,” the Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place has chosen Martha to receive its 2015 Partnership in Mission Award at a special ceremony on Thursday, October 29th. Details to follow. All Micah members are warmly welcome. Please come and help Martha celebrate. Congratulations, Martha!
Warm Welcome: New Additions to Micah Staff

Three talented individuals joined the Temple staff over the summer. Please join us in welcoming them to the Temple Micah community.

MAGGIE HEIDEMA
Assistant Education Director
Born in Mississippi, Heidema always considered the nation’s capital her “home away from home” because her grandparents and extended family were in the area. Her family eventually settled in Little Silver, NJ where she completed high school. “We attended Monmouth Reform Temple and I am proud to say that Rabbi Sally Priesand helped me to become Bat Mitzvah.”

No surprise that she ended up in Washington, attending American University from which she received a degree in Jewish Studies with a secondary focus on education. She went on to attend Baltimore Hebrew University, where she earned a Master’s degree in Jewish Communal Service. She also received a Master’s in Social Work from the University of Maryland—Baltimore.

In the last several years, Heidema has taught and worked as a social worker. She and husband Roy Vinnik are the proud parents of David Edan, 18 months. In her spare time (really?), she enjoys opportunities to be creative—doing crafts, gardening on her balcony, and cooking. “I look forward to helping Machon Micah continue to grow and helping its members learn new and exciting things,” she says.

LINCOLN SKLAR
Communications and Engagement Fellow
Sklar graduated from Ohio University in 2014 where she majored in Journalism with a specialization in Strategic Communications, PR, and Adverting with a minor in Theater. At Ohio U, she was president of the campus Jewish Women’s group. She spent the last year as a Fellow at the American Hebrew Academy—a Jewish, pluralistic boarding school in Greensboro, North Carolina.

While at the Academy, Sklar worked in Campus Life, Jewish Life, and Academic life while also helping teach theater and swing dancing. Previously, she held a summer internship at Washington Jewish Week.

Sklar—who grew up in Bridgeport, WV—loves theater, cats, crafting, and her fiancé, Caleb. She and Caleb are very excited to transition to the DC area and to join the Temple Micah community.

NOAH WESTREICH
Director of Youth Engagement
Also increasing our “Micah and Mississippi” quotient like Heidema (above), Westreich comes to us from the Institute of Southern Jewish Life in Jackson, where he spent the last year as an Education Fellow. In that position, he crisscrossed the South, delivering a Judaic Studies curriculum and inter-generational Jewish programming to communities.

Westreich graduated from Macalester College in 2014 with a degree in Sociology. There, he was a leader of the Macalester Jewish Organization, overseeing campus Jewish life and celebrations, and founded the school’s J Street U, an affiliate of J Street. Throughout the school year, he was a lead Advancement Officer.

Rabbi’s Message FROM PAGE 1 ➤

impatience and dissatisfaction, I finally arrived at a vision statement that for me sets forth what I believe Temple Micah is about at its core. It comes closest to capturing why I am a rabbi. It is this:

The mission of Temple Micah is to advance the Human Project.

Near the dawn of human history, a group that came to be known as Israel and, later, as Jews conceived of a definition of what it meant to be a human being that forever helped to set the course of human life.

This conception was enshrined into our most ancient and holy book, a narrative called Torah. It can in a sense, and only in a sense, be captured by Cain’s biblical question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” It is to commit oneself to the understanding that the most fully lived life is lived in a covenant that carries this message.

The Human Project compels us to understand and fully embrace the demand that our lives have deep, resonant meaning—a meaning that matters to the world. In a word, our lives are sacred. We are each a symbol of an eternal holiness that Jews call God.

The mission of Temple Micah is to inspire us to live within the ever-re-animated Jewish narrative and thus be a covenantal community dedicated to advancing the Human Project.

For me, this is what Temple Micah is about. It is an attempt to translate Torah’s greatest aspiration into a language that resonates in the 21st century. Our collective challenge is to make this manifest in everything we do. It should be our watchword.

We should have it on our “gates and doorposts.” It should inform our decision-making as well as what we teach and learn.

The High Holy Days are a celebration of the Human Project. Rosh Hashanah is the birthday of humankind, the symbol of holiness that reflects God’s image. The Holy Days are our annual opportunity to recalibrate our own lives, take stock and measure ourselves against the great aspiration of the Human Project.

The Holy Days remind us that our work on ourselves and our work on the world is not yet complete. We can each add—this year as every year—a bit of beauty, learning, grace, soulfulness or peace.

God bless you for an inspirational 5776. Come to Temple Micah. Help us engage in the Human Project.

Shalom,
Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel
TZEDAKAH

ENDOWMENT FUND
IN MEMORY OF
Irving Freedman, by John Franken
Jeanette Vale, Samuel Vale, and
Nathan Valasky, by Michelle,
Jason, and Todd Sender

GENERAL FUND
IN HONOR OF
Teddy Klaus, by Nina Rutzen
Teddy Klaus and Rabbi Lederman,
by Randy and Harriet Tritell
Teddy Klaus, Rabbi Landau, and
Rabbi Lederman, by Michelle Sender
IN MEMORY OF
Anna Hadley, by David
and Lucy Asher
Teddy Klaus and Rabbi Landau,
by Randy and Harriet Tritell

KALLEK ADULT EDUCATION FUND
Daniel and Beverly Yett
IN MEMORY OF
Anna Hadley, by David
and Barbara Diskin
Sheldon Seissler, by Douglas
and Hiromi Grob

MICAH HOUSE
Livia and David Bardin
IN MEMORY OF
Anna Hadley, by Richard
and Susan Lahne
Shirley Springer, by Victor Springer

MUSIC FUND
Daniel and Beverly Yett
IN HONOR OF
David and Barbara Diskin, by
Anna Hadley, by Skip and
Barbara Halpern

INNOVATION FUND
IN MEMORY OF
Teddy Klaus, Rabbi Landau, and
Rabbi Lederman, by Michelle Sender

RABBI’S DISCRETIONARY FUND
IN HONOR OF
Learita Scott and Robert
Friedman, by Jeff Passel
Bee Schwartz, by Herbert Schwartz
THANK YOU TO:
Rebecca Socolar, by Milton
and Marlyn Socolar
Brian Stonehill, by Harriet Stonehill

SOCIAL ACTION FUND
IN HONOR OF
Rabbi Esther Lederman, by
Laurie and Dan Brumberg
Harold Sharlin’s 90th birthday,
by Skip and Barbara Halpern
CHESHWAN 5776

THE RABBI DANIEL GOLDMAN ZEMEL FUND
FOR ISRAEL
IN MEMORY OF
Anna Hadley, by David Bardin
Ben Wattenberg, by Jeff Passel

CONDOLENCES
The Temple Micah community extends its
deepest condolences to:

DIANE AUGUST, on the passing of her mother,
Flora August

ELEANOR CORREA, on the passing of her father,
Barry Pessin

JACK HADLEY, on the passing of his mother,
Anna Hadley

OWEN HERRNSTADT, on the passing of his mother,
Helen Herrnstadt

ANDREW FREEDMAN, on the passing of his father,
Irving Freedman

DANIEL WATTENBERG AND RUTH WATTENBERG, on
the passing of their father, Ben Wattenberg

JANE YAMAYKIN, on the passing of her grandmother,
Larisa Itina

May their memories be for a blessing.

Warm Welcome from Previous Page

college, he also taught fourth grade Judaic Studies at Mount
Zion Temple in St. Paul. Westreich spent a semester at the
University of Haifa, and attended a summer ulpan at Tel Aviv
University.

“My philosophy as a Jewish educator is to help people get to
a place where their deepest passions are their proudest ways of
living Judaism,” he says. Speaking of passions, Westreich is a
student pilot, currently training for his private pilot license.
BERAHA'S BLACKBOARD

LEARNING AND LIVING IN ‘JEWISH TIME’

By Rabbi Josh Beraha

Hanging in my office next to a picture of my family is the Machon Micah Mission Statement. This document pre-dates my time at Micah but still animates the Machon I want to build and the vision I seek to uphold. Among the many sentences that give me pause each time I read this thoughtful, inspiring document is: “Jewish learning should take place within Jewish real time.”

What is “Jewish real time” and what does it mean that Jewish learning should take place within it?

In Basic Judaism, rabbi and author Milton Steinberg beautifully writes about the festivals in the Jewish calendar. “So the year is adorned with many colors and much poetry: rams’ horns sounding alarms to lethargic souls; white robes on the scrolls of the Torah in symbol of purity and rebirth; palm branches and citrons; wide-branching eight-armed candelabra illumined each night with increasing light; noise-makers drowning out a persecutor’s name; doors being opened for Elijah, forerunner of the deliverer Messiah; the sad intonation of the Book of Lamentations; the seven prophetic lessons of consolation; the eerie midnight service which inaugurates the season of penitence... So too is the year transmuted into a round of sacred occasions gay and austere reflecting Israel’s past, man’s timeless aspirations, and the hopes of both for the future.”

What Steinberg describes from the rams’ horns to the eerie midnight services of selichot is Jewish real time—the times of year when the rhythm of the Jewish calendar grabs our entire selves and ushers us into rituals that captivate our senses.

To live in Jewish real time is to experience the colors and poetry that Steinberg so eloquently describes.

Experience is everything! The American philosopher William James, in his 1904 essay “Does ‘Consciousness’ Exist?: attempts to show the lack of difference between thought and things. James affirms “that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed”—and that stuff can be called “pure experience.” In other words, if you want to know something, you have to immerse yourself in it completely and experience it. Consciousness is constantly in flux and is composed of our thoughts and the physical world.

When we say that Jewish learning should take place within Jewish real time, we are standing on James’ (and many others, to be sure) philosophical foundation. Do you want to learn about Judaism? Impossible—unless what you desire are facts without a coherent context. To learn is to experience. Judaism cannot be known apart from its practices. Within our worship and rituals lie what Professor James K. A. Smith calls “a kind of irreducible genius.” Practices, as opposed to doctrines or beliefs, explains Smith, bear “an understanding that eludes articulation in cognitive categories.” In Machon Micah we emphasize Jewish real time with the understanding that to learn is to live within the beauty of our sacred occasions, to have our deepest desires and fears aroused by the truths that are at the core of each holiday.

We are currently in the Hebrew month of Elul. In a few weeks we will stand together before the ark and consider who we are. With the gates open and the high court adjourned we will declare that we are “like withered grass and like a faded blossom, like a passing shadow and like a vanishing cloud...” It is in these chilling moments that we fully experience Jewish time and in doing so, become true Jewish actors in the drama of our tradition.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!
Christine Beresniowa and Rokas Beresniowa, Gregory and Julianna Caplan, Benjamin and Eleanor Correa, Ruth and William Henoch, Peter Lovenheim, Herman and Mary Schwartz, and Sara Swatzburg

President’s Column from Page 2 ▶

member-folk singer-lawyer Doug Mishkin put on concerts that raised money to help send students to Israel or Jewish camp. When he wasn’t performing himself, Mishkin brought in big-name talent, such as Debbie Friedman and Tom Chapin. This is a place with spirituality and spirit.

We at Micah take our task seriously. Rabbi Zemel talks about nothing less than advancing the human project. The human project!

But we don’t take ourselves seriously. In other words, we have lots of fun.

From Bowling Together to Baseball Simchat Torah, from Purimspiels to magic by the Great Loudini, we are never short of laughs.

Did you love your religious school? Most adults did not. We re-envisioned ours, shifting it from a traditional classroom-oriented series of Sundays to an experience for kids and adults. Rabbi Josh Beraha is re-working it still, bringing fresh ideas for our youngest and oldest members (and everyone in between).

Did you drop out of synagogue life as you entered adulthood? Me, too. Through Next Dor, we’re creating a new way to meet young adults where they live. Launched by Rabbi Esther Lederman and now captained by Rabbi Susan Landau, Next Dor has energized a new generation of people who will help us chart a fresh American Jewish path in this young century.

This is a place that is forward looking. There is much more—so much more—that makes Micah special to me. Micah House, Micah Cooks, our listening campaigns and all that grew out of them, visits to the MLK Memorial, the Pete Seeger memorial Shabbat, the People of the Book Fair, dinners and parties that I have purchased at the auction, Kol Isha, Shabbat Shalom Around Town. The Yom Kippur blessing to honor non-Jewish spouses. Bnai Mitzvah. Underwear Month. Friendships.

I hope each of you has your own list. Because... this is a place that is worth celebrating.
We wish you a happy and healthy new year in a world at peace.