



Vassar Temple

Where You belong

Congregation Brethren of Israel Founded 1848 - Bulletin Volume 169 No. 4 December 2020



Upcoming Events

December

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Please join us for a winter FUNdraiser!

Sunday, February 7 at 4pm

Kosher, Quality, and Value: the Wines of Israel

A 2-hour virtual event including an introductory-level seminar on Israeli wines (industry history, geography, grapes, and the story of Israel's Barkan Wine Cellars), and a guided tasting of four Barkan Classic Series kosher wines (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon).

Presented by Vassar Temple member Arnie Serotsky, VP and Tasting Advisory Chair of *It Was A Good Year, Inc.*, a four-decade old Mid-Hudson Valley wine education and tasting group.

Deadline to register: January 15 to allow for wine ordering and pickup. (After this date, participants are welcome but we cannot guarantee wine availability.) To register, send an email to Arnie at wine@vassartemple.org. Mail a check to Vassar Temple with "wine tasting" on the memo line. Cost: \$20 per individual participant, to benefit Vassar Temple.

Zoom link will be provided to participants in advance.

The 4 wines will be available for pickup from MyWine at South Hills Mall. Participants will pay the store directly for the wine, at a discounted price of \$44.60 including tax. We will notify participants when the wine is available, in advance of the event, and will endeavor to facilitate delivery to different locales via volunteers.

Arnie will provide food pairing recommendations with a Kosher/Jewish/Israeli theme and will send a simplified wine tasting note sheet that can be downloaded to use during the tasting. Following the tasting, he will take any and all wine questions and will email presentation notes to participants.

Thank you High Holy Day Appeal

We thank the following donors who have generously contributed to this year's High Holy Day Appeal. These were the names that were received as of our print deadline. There is still plenty of opportunity to donate. Please join your fellow Congregants in supporting the financial stability of Vassar Temple. Future donors will be listed in the next Bulletin. Again, our sincere gratitude for your support of this year's HHD Appeal and your ongoing commitment to the future of Vassar Temple.

Please see list of donors on page 4.

Lisa-Sue Quackenbush

From the Rabbi's Desk



I'm writing this column on Election Day, trying to concentrate as the early reports come in. I'm trying to imagine December and the picture is just

blank; it is just impossible to imagine what this country will be like after this momentous election and its aftermath. As we turn towards winter and the cold keeps us inside, what will COVID rates be like? How many more will have died or contracted the virus? How many more will be unemployed, what restaurants and businesses will have closed? It all seems so dark. But then I see lights – nine little lights that pierce the darkness, because by December we will be in the month of Kislev and that means Hanukkah.

Hanukkah comes at the darkest time of the year (no surprise about holidays with lights in the winter!). It is a holiday that is filled with light and with hope: the victory of the few against the many; the battle for religious freedom; the courage to

stand up and fight for what is right. Each night we kindle lights to remember the heroism of the Maccabees and their miraculous victory in overcoming the powerful Syrian army and its King Antiochus, who sought to wipe out the Jews by forcing them to give up their faith. We place the Hanukkiyah in the windows, not only to publicize the miracle as tradition teaches us, but as a public statement of pride in who we are. And we follow the practice of Hillel and not Shammai, who taught that in matters of holiness we increase the light each night by adding a candle on each succeeding day. Each day we increase the light against the darkness, we bring more hope and promise.

Regardless of who will have won this election, a significant portion of our country will feel that it is in darkness. We need to find ways to kindle lights of hope for our whole country, to find a way back to America. Hanukkah literally means “dedication” and is named for the dedication celebration led by the Maccabees upon reclaiming the Temple and cleansing and purifying it from the desecration of the Assyrians. Let us strive to make this December a Hanukkah for America, a time of rededication to its purpose and potential, to forge a path that will take us beyond the divisions and labels and find ways to live

together by appreciating our diversity and acting with empathy and not hatred. May the prayer enshrined in one of our most beloved songs yet come true:

America! America!

God shed His grace on thee,

And crown thee good with brotherhood

From sea to shining sea!

Please do join us for our annual Hanukkah Shabbat celebration on Friday, December 11 at 6:00pm. As we have been adjusting our traditions for distance services, so, too, will we carry forward Vassar Temple Hanukkah traditions on Zoom. Let us fill all of our viewers with Hanukkiot burning brightly as, together, we celebrate this great Festival of Lights.

Rabbi Rennei Altman

President's Message

One goal I set for my term is to take greater advantage of the resources available to us through our affiliation with the Union for Reform Judaism, for which we make a supporting commitment. I was fortunate to attend October's Scheidt Seminar for congregational



presidents. A number of our presidents have attended in the past, and I had heard good things. Since we do not have a budget for such activities, I was grateful to receive a URJ grant to offset the cost. I had anticipated a first visit to Atlanta for this event but, 2020 being what it is, I found myself on Zoom for four days for the convening of 138 presidents from across the US along with URJ staff and speakers.

The staff worked diligently to establish these days as a separate and special time. We were encouraged to create a private space from which to attend. Each partici-

pant received an advance package containing a mug, a door hanger saying “Please do not disturb - change agent in progress,” and a candle and cinnamon stick for the Saturday night havdalah which family was invited to join.

The program was a robust combination of small- and large-group workshops on vital topics such as leadership, innovation, finances and philanthropy, and engagement. I had the opportunity to attend drop-in sessions on a variety of topics and to schedule a one-on-one meeting with the Director of Congregational Services. Time was set aside for Shabbat worship and study with Rabbi Rick Jacobs, URJ President, and the entire event was graced by the exquisite contributions of Cantor Rosalie Will, URJ Director of Worship and Music.

Despite the limitations of virtual attendance, attendees sensed an instantaneous bond. Not only do all of our congregations face similar challenges, but we also share the distinction of being, as one participant dubbed us, “The Covid Presidents.” Thanks to the supportive, open, and honest communication of this group, everyone took important steps towards

embracing this unexpected and undesired, but realistic, identity. The URJ is launching its first Presidents Network, and I signed up! I've been placed with a group of five others with whom I will collaborate for at least the next year, initially facilitated by URJ staff but then becoming an autonomous group. I'm grateful and excited to have these new friends to share ideas, problems, and successes. If Scheidt was any indication, it will be incredibly valuable over the long term.

This column is an inadequate space to detail the numerous concepts that I gained from Scheidt, but I look forward to implementing a range of ideas with the support of our dedicated leadership. Some of my learning was intensely personal, some related to positive actions that I can take immediately, and some was about big concepts that we need to consider in order to move into the future. I emerged from Scheidt refreshed and inspired and thank all of you for giving me the space and time to give it my undivided attention.

Susan Karnes Hecht

December Worship Service Schedule

4	7:30pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Altman and Joseph Bertolozzi, keyboard
5	9:00am	Torah Study
	10:15pm	New Paths Service
11	6:00pm	Simchat Shabbat Chanukah Service with Rabbi Altman, Cantor Goldmann and Joseph Bertolozzi, keyboard
12	9:00am	Torah Study
18	7:30pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Altman, Cantor Goldmann and Joseph Bertolozzi, keyboard
19		Shabbaton on Zoom for Vassar Temple, Temple Beth El, Shir Chadash & Vassar College
	9:00am	Torah Study (led by Rabbis of VT, TBE, Shir Chadash & Vassar College)
	10:00am	Shabbat Service (led by Rabbis & Cantors of VT, TBE, Shir Chadash & Vassar College)
25	6:00pm	Shabbat Service with Rabbi Altman and Joseph Bertolozzi, keyboard
26	9:00am	Torah Study

All of these events will be available virtually. To obtain the most up to date information regarding each service (including New Paths) or Torah Study please refer to the weekly emails. For Zoom link details for the December 19 Shabbaton please check the weekly e-mails.

New Paths Services

Join us at the New Paths Sabbath morning service Saturday Dec. 5 at 10:15am on Zoom. The moving liturgy of the New Paths prayer book includes both traditional and contemporary writings, mostly in English, and participants may bring supplemental materials to share. We take the time to let the service get through us, rather than getting through the service. Each New Paths service, whether lay-led or rabbi-led, provides a unique and thoughtful Shabbat morning experience. A brief mini-kiddush follows (BYO wine or grape juice). For more information, please contact Marian Schwartz mschwa9882@aol.com or Rabbi Altman rabbi@vassartemple.org, and for the Zoom link see the temple weekly e-reminder or contact the temple office at office@vassartemple.org or 845-454-2570.

Scriptural Readings for December

5	<i>Vayishlach</i> Gen. 32:4-36:43; Hosea 11:7-12:12
12	<i>Shabbat Hanukkah</i> <i>Vayeishev</i> Gen. 37:1-40:23; Zech. 4:1-7
19	<i>Mikeitz</i> Gen. 41:1-44:17; I Kings 3:15-4:1
26	<i>Vayigash</i> Gen. 44:18-47:27; Ezekiel 37:15-28

Chanukah Cookie Baking Sunday, Dec. 6 1-3pm

Let's join together (in safety*) in the Social Hall to create Chanukah sugar cookies. Sponsored by Sisterhood, this event will take place on Sunday, Dec. 6 from 1-3pm. You can bring a batch of dough if you wish; the recipe will be provided at registration. Decorations will be provided; bring a rolling pin if you have one.

You MUST preregister to attend by Dec. 3. Please email cookies@vassartemple.org and include the number in your group and whether you will bring dough.

*We will cap the number at 25% Social Hall Capacity.

CDC & Dept. of Health Guidelines may determine postponing or cancelling the event.

Temperature checks, Health Questionnaires, Masks and Social Distancing, Hand Washing, etc. required.

Family units or Familiar Social Pods or Bubbles will be kept together.

Mazel Tov

To Howard Susser and Shirl Davis-Susser on the marriage of their daughter, Jessica, to Cameron McEwen.

Thank You

A big thank you to Adriaan and Sam Finnerman for their generous donation of a water cooler and delivery to the temple to provide clean water - on the main floor! - for our staff, volunteers, and visitors. In addition to improving our work environment, this alleviates concerns about drinking water quality during this time of reduced use of our plumbing.

Condolences

To:

The family of Shirley Hope Mann, beloved mother of Barbara Lemberger

Bimah Flowers Donations

Just as Shabbat Services help brighten our weeks, so do the Bimah flowers which brighten our Sanctuary. If anyone would like to make a donation to sponsor our silk flower arrangements while services are being held virtually, please let the office know. The sponsor's name and remembrance or Simcha will be acknowledged just like with our fresh Bimah flower arrangements.

December 2020 Bimah Silk Flowers Sponsors:

December 4: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund

December 11: Donated by Melissa Erlebacher in memory of Seth Erlebacher

December 18: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund

December 25: Donated by Vassar Temple Sisterhood Bimah Flower Fund

October 2020 Bimah Flowers Sponsors Update:

October 30:
Donated by the Confirmation Class Parents:

Bruce & Eve Gendron,
Andrew & Rose Hartman
Alan & Meredith Kafflowitz
Jeremy & Danah Moore

in honor of their daughters Hannah, Isabelle, Haley, and Amanda becoming Confirmands.

High Holy Day Appeal Donors

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Community Shabbaton Saturday, December 19

Meet Rabbi Bryan Mann,

*Rachlin Director of Jewish Student Life
at Vassar College*

Last spring the annual Community Shabbaton was cancelled due to COVID-19. We are currently in conversation with the speaker, Dr. Ariel Burger, author of WITNESS: Lessons from Elie Wiesel's Classroom to reschedule his talks in the format of a mid-week lecture series in the winter (as he is Orthodox and does not use the internet on Shabbat).

The Community Shabbaton is about much more than the speaker, however. Praying together and experiencing each other's Shabbat traditions is a very rich aspect of this annual tradition. Therefore, we are scheduling both a Friday night and a Shabbat morning community Shabbat service. Each will be broadcast from a sanctuary and everyone but the main service leaders will participate via Zoom.

The Shabbat morning joint worship will take place on Saturday, December 19, hosted by Temple Beth-El. We are so pleased to introduce our congregations to Rabbi Bryan Mann, the new Rachlin Director of Jewish Student Life at Vassar College and Assistant Director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Contemplative Practices. Rabbi Mann will join the rabbis of Temple Beth-El, Congregation Shir Chadash and Vassar Temple in a joint Torah study session at 9:00am. Rabbi Mann, an ordinee of Hebrew College Rabbinical School in Newton Centre MA, comes to Vassar College from Brandon, FL where he was senior rabbi at Congregation Beth Shalom. Following Torah study, at 10:00am, we will move into worship, which will also involve participation of the cantors from the different congregations, enriching the worship experience with the varieties of musical traditions.

In the spring, Vassar Temple will host an Erev Shabbat Joint Worship Service on Friday, March 5 as part of HIAS Shabbat. More details to follow.

Please join us – BYOK – bring your own kiddush! Zoom links will follow in the e-mail newsletter.

Simchat Shabbat Chanukah Candle Lighting Service

Friday Dec 11 6pm

Join us as we light up the night at our annual family-friendly candle lighting service, led by Rabbi Altman and Cantor Goldmann. The service will be on Zoom, but we will be preserving as many of our cherished Vassar Temple Chanukah traditions as possible. So you can still look forward to the lighting of the *chanukiah* in the sanctuary, favorite songs and games, and the warmth of being with your Vassar Temple family. We also promise a few innovations to help make that happen. Although this year we will be lighting our menorahs in our individual homes instead of together in the temple, we would like to continue our tradition of displaying all our lit menorahs together. *So we invite you to send us either a photo or a video of your family lighting your menorah set up for the second day of Chanukah.* Just send your photo or video to Joel Kelson at templevideos@vassartemple.org as soon as possible, so he can combine them with a beautiful musical background, and we will display them all together at the end of the service. If you make a video, you could choose to recite the blessing. If you have a special or historical menorah, we'd love to hear a few words about it in your video as well. Even if you can't send in a photo or video, everyone can light their own menorahs simultaneously, at home, at the end of the service. Have your menorah set up to light for the second night of the holiday, and you may also want to have a few Chanukah cookies or donuts on hand for oneg munching as well! For the Zoom link to the candle lighting service, watch the temple weekly e-mails, or contact office@vassar-temple.org.

Thank you to our Confirmands!

It has been traditional for our Confirmation classes to make a donation to the Temple to cover a specific need. This year, we are very grateful to the four Confirmation families (Kaflowitz, Gendron, Moore, and Hartman) for donating to the Eternal Torah Fund to enable the purchase of needed materials to create a humidity control system for the ark. This recommendation was made by our sofer (scribe) for the long-term health of our precious scrolls. It is a fitting gift, representing tangible preservation, in parallel with the commitment made by our confirmands to living the values of the Torah. A small plaque acknowledging this gift will be placed in the sanctuary.

Religious School Update

Students, teachers and parents have been adjusting well to our new mode of learning and enjoying the creative materials that Shalomlearning provides. Each week we begin with the whole school together for a 15-minute enrichment period, following a rotation of music with Morah Olivia, a short tefillah or "Rabbi time" with either a story or open time for questions. Then the classes go into their own break out rooms for instruction. It's a shorter day learning online than it would be in person, but it is a rich and meaningful experience. On Sunday, December 13, we will join in a community-wide zoom Hanukkah event hosted and coordinated by Temple Beth-El, featuring Milton the Menorah: A Hanukkah Adventure performed by the Bible Players. The Bible players, a team of actors using improv and comedy to teach Jewish lives, will also do improv activities with different age groups before or after the performance. Families are asked to submit recordings in advance of them doing various Hanukkah related activities: lighting candles, playing dreidel, making latkes, etc. Watch for more details and Zoom links in the weekly newsletter.

Rabbi Renni Altman

Vassar Temple Bulletin

Published Monthly
Publisher: Marianne Abrams and Bob Abrams
Editor: Jo Schaffel
Technical support & understudy
Bob Abrams

Articles for the **January Bulletin** must be submitted to the Temple office by **December 1st**. Articles may be sent via email to publicity@vassartemple.org. The editors reserve the right to edit articles for style, accuracy and length.

Help Needed! Jewish Night at the Shelter

Judy Harkavy of our Social Action Committee organizes dinners at the overnight homeless shelter in Hillcrest House the fourth Thursday of the month (“Jewish Night”) year-round. While members of the local Jewish community have taken on this monthly mitzvah, we cannot accomplish the task alone. Adult volunteers of all faiths -- family, friends, neighbors, co-workers -- are gratefully welcome to help on that night! The shelter, which is located in the vicinity of Dutchess Community College, was expanded to accommodate 60 overnight guests, yet during the past few winters it has been as much as 50% over capacity, so the need has become greater than ever. The volunteers prepare and provide items on that evening’s menu (which depending on the season might be chili, casseroles, soup, sandwiches, etc.) which someone can generally transport there for you if necessary. A few volunteers are urgently needed on site to serve the meal between 6:30-9pm. Sometimes items for the following morning’s breakfast—cereal, juice, fruit—are also requested. Judy is currently booking helpers for future dates. Please contact her at shelter@vassartemple.org to discuss when and how you can help.

Sisterhood News

Our Sisterhood remains busy and vibrant as ever, from updating our Judaica windows for Chanukah, to preparing our Sisterhood Friendship Calendar for printing, to our recent Deborah Tannen Zoom lecture, virtual Chai Noon luncheons, providing *Reyut* meals and more. You can see some of the items available in our Judaica Shoppe by clicking on the VTS Judaica link on the temple web site. By now you have all received your membership brochure for the 2020-2021 year, and dues have been coming in. If you forgot to send your dues, please do so.

Our first in-person event, Chanukah Cookie Baking is scheduled for December 6 in the Social Hall. Publicity has gone out and you must RSVP by December 3 in order to attend, as there are space limitations and we cannot accommodate you without an RSVP. Contact cookies@vassartemple.org for more information..

Our *Reyut* is looking for those of you who can provide containers of soup for distribution to our homebound or ill members. Contact Judy at Reyut@vassartemple.org if you are able to contribute.

Finally, please attend the Sisterhood General Meeting via Zoom on Monday, December 14 at 6:30pm. Bring your Chanukah Menorah and favorite dreidel. Join us to congratulate our Evelyn Kahn Spirit of Sisterhood Award Winner.

Please send any ideas for future events to sisterhood@vassartemple.org.

Without you we are one woman short!

Marcia Tanzman

Book Club to Discuss The Book of Lost Friends on December 16

Vassar Temple’s Sisterhood Book Club will discuss *The Book of Lost Friends* by best-selling author Lisa Windgate. Through her writing, the author brings to life startling stories from actual “Lost Friends” advertisements that appeared in Southern newspapers after the Civil War, as newly freed slaves desperately searched for loved ones who had been sold away. This historical novel tells the story of three young women searching for family amid the destruction of the post-Civil War South, and of a modern-day teacher who learns of their story and its vital connection to her own students’ lives.

Louisiana, 1875: In the tumultuous era of Reconstruction, three young women set off as unwilling companions on a perilous quest as they head for Texas, each carrying private wounds and powerful secrets, searching for long-lost families. Their quest leads them through roads rife with vigilantes and soldiers still fighting a war lost a decade before.

Louisiana, 1987: First-year teacher Benedetto Silva lands a job in a tiny Mississippi town, where she can scarcely comprehend the lives of her poverty-stricken students. Amid the run-down plantation homes lie the century-old history of three young women, a long-ago journey, and a hidden book that could change everything.

This moving novel is available through the local library system. The meeting will take place through Zoom, on Wednesday, December 16, at 2pm. Irma Jacobs will lead the discussion to which everyone is welcome. To RSVP or get more information, please contact Linda Babas at bookclub@vassartemple.org or through the temple office a 454-2570. Look forward to “seeing” you!

Brotherhood News

Let me begin by thanking all the men who participated in the Brotherhood Shabbat in November. Next year I hope we will be able to return to the Bimah for this annual event.

We have not collected dues yet for this year but that is not an error. We have not had any expenses since the pandemic began, so I decided to postpone dues collection. On the assumption that brighter days are ahead, I am requesting that the annual dues of \$36 be remitted now to the Temple Office with the notation "Brotherhood Dues" on the memo line. Dues will now cover calendar year 2021.

We will plan to hold virtual "Happy Hours" again starting in December. We had some power outages the last few times we tried but when we did meet it was very enjoyable. It is important to stay active and stay connected and if you have any suggestions to help us stay connected, please feel free to contact me at brotherhood@vassartemple.org

Be well and stay strong.

Glenn Tanzman

An Easy Way to Purchase SCRIP!

SCRIP sales raise a lot of money for the Temple which, in turn, helps to support programming, quality personnel and building maintenance. SCRIP - or gift cards - are available to local and national retailers and make great gifts, as well as being easy to use as payments when making your own regular purchases at the grocery store, pharmacy, coffee shop and so much more. How can you easily get SCRIP? You can instruct your bank to bill pay the temple directly: either a one-time payment for that occasional card you need, or set up monthly recurrent payments for cards that you use regularly. So, for instance, if you spend \$100 a month at Adams, you can have your bank send a check directly from your account to ours for \$100 and we will get you the Adams card. In the case of Adams, the Temple makes 10% which is just AMAZING!

Need help getting started? Either contact Sandra, the SCRIP coordinator at scrip@vassartemple.org or speak with our knowledgeable office staff.

It is so easy to support this initiative and do a wonderful thing for your Temple!



Happy Hanukkah from the Bulletin Staff!



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DECEMBER 11

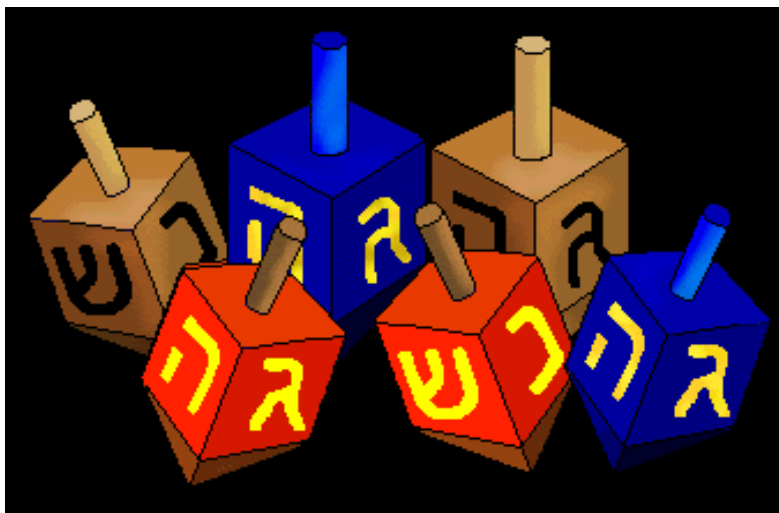
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DECEMBER 18

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DECEMBER 25

Ida Krevolin
Herman R. Gross
Ruth Stein
Stella W. Renick
Goldie Bleich
Dr. Doris Berlin-Acker
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2nd Vice President: Shaari Roland
Secretary: Glenn Tanzman
Treasurer: Brett Colbert
Sisterhood President: Marcia Tanzman
Brotherhood President: Glenn Tanzman
Immediate Past President: Alan Kaflowitz

December 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 4:30pm Hebrew School 7:30pm Adult Ed: Back to the Sources	3 7pm Ritual Committee	4 7:30pm Shabbat Service	5 9am Torah Study 10:15am New Paths
6 10am Religious School 10:30am Lunch Box 1pm VTS Chanukah Cookie Event	7	8	9 4:30pm Hebrew School 7:30pm Adult Ed: Back to the Sources	10 1st night of Chanukah 7pm Racism Reading Group	11 6pm Simchat Shabbat Chanukah Service	12 9am Torah Study
13	14 6:30pm Sisterhood General Mtg	15	16 2pm VTS Book Club 4:30pm Hebrew School 7pm Finance Cmte	17 12pm Talmud Study w/ Rabbi Golomb 7pm Board Meeting	18 12noon VTS Chai Noon 7:30pm Shabbat Service	19 9am Torah Study 10am Shabbaton Service
20	21	22	23	24 6:30pm Shelter Meal	25 Christmas Day 6pm Shabbat Service	26 9am Torah Study
27	28	29	30	31		