



Dear Beth Shalom, ELC & JJEP families,

I am writing to invite you to join a communal conversation beginning Sunday, November 14th, and continuing through this March, when we will mark one hundred years since the Beacon Street groundbreaking ceremony in 1922. Our commemoration process starts, however, with reflections on a more recent and destructive event.

As you may know, in October 1996 a major fire destroyed much of Beth Shalom. Our members and other community leaders immediately and through the aftermath responded when Beth Shalom needed it the most, and this fall we have begun to commemorate the recovery and rebuilding efforts organized during 5757 (1996-1997).

At 10am on Sunday the 14th, we will hold an intergenerational program to recall the events of October 1996: the day of the fire, the courage of those who rescued our sacred Torah scrolls, and the immediate aftermath of the fire.

Please mark your calendars for November 14th, as a panel of Beth Shalom leaders including Lisa and Rabbi Stephen Steindel, Harvey Robins, Julian Elbling, and Ira Frank will share stories and reflections from the October 1996 fire in conversation with newer Beth Shalom members Tammy Hepps and Chris Hall, two Derekh lay leaders eager to learn lessons from those events.

Information for attending this event in person or online over Zoom will be provided by email and can be found on our website (<https://bethshalompgh.org/remembering-25anniversary-of-fire/>).

As a newcomer to Beth Shalom who recently moved to Pittsburgh just this year, I eagerly anticipate hearing these stories of individual and collective leadership in the face of such terrible circumstances. I look forward to learning about how Beth Shalom arose anew from the ashes to become a home to such a diverse set of Jewish and secular communal organizations over the past quarter century.

Those who rebuilt Beth Shalom after the October 1996 fire put structures in place that now house not only our synagogue, but another, New Light Congregation; not only our Early Learning Center, but our tenant day care, La Escuelita Arcoiris, on the floor above the ELC; not only our offices, but those of our community newspaper, the Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle; and our in-house caterer Elegant Edge, which provides not only food for our weekly Kiddush after Shabbat services, but meals also for many in our community.

Please also hold the weekend of March 18-20, 2022 - we will commemorate not just the recovery and rebuilding from the fire 25 years ago, but the Centennial Anniversary of the initial groundbreaking to establish Beth Shalom here on the Beacon Street property in 1922.

Thanks in advance for your participation and Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Andy Shugerman  
Development Director for Congregation Beth Shalom