



Update to our Supporters July 2023

This past year was a transitional year for Beth Tzedec. We found ourselves emerging from the dark and lonely days of the pandemic to gathering with community once again. We shifted from meeting primarily in the online space, to seeing each other *panim el panim*- face to face, in person. As we emerged, the need for spiritual care for our *kehillah* did not go away - fortunately, your generosity and our pre-pandemic efforts to create the **Beth Tzedec Centre for Spiritual Well-Being** gave us the necessary training and personnel to meet the increased need. Beth Tzedec remains one of only a handful of North American congregations with the skills and programming offered by our Centre.

The **Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl Endowment** that supports the Centre has raised \$2.5 million. Approximately \$1.86 million in cash has been received to date. Our return on investment has been strong! Within the next 18 months, this endowment will be fully funded. Our spending policy is 3.5% of the total balance after 12 months. In addition, we receive annual contributions to the Centre of approximately \$100,000. As a result, the annual revenue for the Centre is approximately \$165,100. 30% of that total, or \$49, 530, is used to support our second rabbi. The remainder, \$115,000, is used to support the Centre's mission.

Members of our Spiritual Leadership Team (Rabbis Wernick, Fryer Bodzin, Frydman-Kohl and Yacov Fruchter) complete 45 **pastoral care** calls and visits monthly. Most of our work helps people address loss and bereavement, anxiety, and loneliness. We listen, pray, and meditate together. This past year we have been present and supported members of our community with early and late term pregnancy loss, abuse, addiction, and adult bullying. We share relevant texts and wisdom that provide comfort. Each engagement lasts 30-40 minutes and annually, we reach 300 members of our community.

From a member:

It was a tough couple of weeks for everyone involved with this tragic episode. Obviously more so for xx's mom, dad and sisters. The funeral was held yesterday afternoon in Mexico City. The family is seating shiva. Thanks for being there for us. Everyone from Beth Tzedec, you, Rabbi xx and xxx, were great support for us.... Many thanks to everyone, Shabbat Shalom!

From a member:

Just a short note to say thank you for your support of my family these past months. We have had a full load these past years and your contributions made the journey certainly less difficult.



Two of our SLT members are specially trained in the mental health professions. **Rabbi Fryer Bodzin** holds a *Master of Social Work* and **Yacov Fruchter** holds a *Masters in Pastoral Studies* and *Certificate in Spiritual Based Psychotherapy*. Their level of training adds skills as well as professionalism to **Grieving Together**, our ongoing bereavement group. More than 30 people participated this past year.

Our **Small Group strategy** continues to allow Beth Tzedec to provide a smaller, more intimate community of individuals who care for each other. Most Small Groups are led by volunteers trained in Jewish relationship-based engagement by Yacov Fruchter and Joanne Schwebel, a member of the Congregation. Each group consists of 6 to 15 people ranging in age from their 20s to their 90s.

Last year, we had over 15 groups. When asked if participation in a small group *“Increased my meaningful connections and friendships with others at Beth Tzedec”* – 91% responded positively, up 6% from last year. 83% felt it decreased their isolation – up 8% over last year. More participants also saw members outside of the small group, which is also a goal of the program.

2023-2024 Small Groups, which are spiritually directed, include:

- Sulam for Emerging Leaders
- Jewish Couplehood
- Wise Aging
- Torah and Tree Pose
- Zentangle
- So you want to write your own memoir?
- Grieving Together

Aviva Chernick, our Artist in Residence, continues her training at the **Institute for Jewish Spirituality**, currently participating in **Yesod: Foundations for Deepening Jewish Mindfulness Meditation**. Aviva is also in the pilot cohort of teacher trainees in Emotionally Integrated Voice-EIV, pioneered by Aviva's teacher **Fides Krucker**. It is a wellness practice used far beyond the community of professional singers. This past year she led two Friday Zoom meditations series of 6 weeks each. Each had a minimum of 20 participants.



Bree-AH is a series of programs, designed by Aviva Chernick in 2020, exploring the relationship between, and integration of creativity and prayer. This past year, Bree-AH evolved again to **Bree-AH/The Arts and Pray/Play Lab**, developing the Arts and Prayer Lab model to include a greater focus on the morning service, and weaving *tefilah* together with arts practice, this time in person. 7-10 people between the ages of 20-80, covering each decade in between, journeyed together with Aviva each Sunday in November and in March. All the participants began a communication thread outside the group, making dates to meet each other at shul and attending various programs together.

From one participant/Generations Membership member:

This experience opened prayer for and to me, letting me in to prayer in a soul-aligned way, and turned something that had negative connotations into something immensely healing and positive: making it mine. I also am still in contact with many fellow participants both inside and outside of shul.

We established a partnership with **Camp Ramah** and last year offered the first annual **Nashuva: A Jewish Mindfulness Retreat in Preparation for High Holy Days**. Rabbi Fryer Bodzin and Aviva Chernick were both faculty for this 5-day long retreat. We are expanding our spiritual retreats for the upcoming year, including a day long retreat in July at **Bela Farms** called **Kirva**.

In November, we partnered with the **Jewish Theological Seminary** in their pilot program **Shabbat Hayyei Sarah: Finding Comfort and Renewal in Jewish Sources**. In a program developed by JTS's **Center for Pastoral Education**, 20 people came together to raise our consciousness and validate the hardships that people have gone through. We studied Jewish texts that Rabbi Fryer Bodzin assembled as a source of consoling, healing and renewal.

This past year Rabbi Fryer Bodzin and Yacov Fruchter mentored **Aaron Rotenberg**, a Generations Member, and a student at **ALEPH Rabbinical School**. In his role as **Hesed Intern**, Aaron connected with 35 members who the SLT identified would benefit from extra care and connection.

We estimate that through the Centre for Spiritual Well-being we engaged with 625 unique individuals during the 2022-2023 synagogue year. The impact of the Centre, however, is significantly higher as the training of our Spiritual Leaders impacts all of our work and the people we engage on a daily basis, especially our pastoral care, prayer leadership and relationship building.

In the upcoming year, we intend to increase our retreats and add a new Shabbat morning meditation. Rabbi Fryer Bodzin will participate in a new form of professional development at a **Ramah Beyond/IJS Mindfulness Retreat** in February. Aviva Chernick has moved from being on



a contract to a full-time employee, which highlights our long-term investment in wellbeing. We have received a multimillion-dollar pledge to remodel the museum space into a multi-use space, with a vision for a future home for Centre for Spiritual Well-Being programming.

The Beth Tzedec Centre for Spiritual Well-Being continues to engage hundreds of members of our community, many of whom we would not otherwise be engaging. These engagements are not simply through events or programs— they are experiences designed to impact a person’s well-being through care, connection, and Jewish wisdom. The data we are collecting demonstrate that we are achieving our stated goals. This work is enhancing our overall culture, where Beth Tzedec truly *inspires and enables our members to live meaningful Jewish lives*.

The work we have undertaken requires funding beyond Beth Tzedec’s normal revenue streams. We have learned that to the extent we can control additional costs to participants, we can broaden our reach in the community. It is for this reason that we so appreciate your prompt payment of your pledge if you have not already done so. We also welcome additional gifts to support this transformative work.

We invite you to offer suggestions, ask questions or discuss our Beth Tzedec Centre for Spiritual Well-Being with us at any time.

Thank you for your ongoing support and generosity.

L’shalom,

Rabbi Steven C. Wernick
The Ann and Max Tanenbaum Sr. Rabbi

Rabbi Robyn Fryer Bodzin
Director the Centre for
Spiritual Well-Being

cc: Harold Wolfe, co-chair Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl Endowment Fund
Paul Rothstein, co-chair Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl Endowment Fund
Patti Rotman, President
Don Smith, Chair of the Board