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From The Rabbi

Dear Betenu Community,

I hope your family had a wonderful, sunny, fun-filled summer... AND that you are ready to jump back into the swing of things! I am beyond thrilled to be embarking on this exciting expedition with you. This is a new role for me, and I am counting on you to help me tackle the challenge of guiding you and your children through this important Jewish journey. Together we will learn new information, grow as individuals, absorb wisdom and change our viewpoints many times over! This transformative experience is not only for our students under the age of 13, but hopefully for all of us, since ultimately we are all lifelong students of Judaism. And as students, it is our responsibility to teach each other and be open to learn from one another.

The blessing we say before we begin to study Torah ends with the phrase, “*la’asok b’divrei Torah*”, which means “to engross ourselves in Torah”. This is one of my favorite blessings, because the Hebrew word “la’asok” sounds just like the English word “soak”! And aren’t soak, engross and absorb all synonyms? When I think of absorbing Torah, I imagine myself lounging lazily in a big pool of Torah, just soaking it in! It has such calming and peaceful imagery to me. I hope that the thought of studying Torah brings you a sense of calm as well.

Together we are going to envelope ourselves in Torah’s peaceful presence and spend the year studying her vast wisdom. I know that this is going to be an exciting year full of discovery for all of us. I’m looking forward to spending the spring semester with you after I return from Maternity leave and I hope that you are looking forward to diving right into that pool of Torah with me!

B’Shalom,
Rav Bekah

Sept 2015

From the Education Committee

Sept. 2015

Elul 5776

Dear Parents,

Along with our Rabbi and staff, we welcome you and your family to a new year at Congregation Betenu Religious School.

The mission of Congregation Betenu is to **be a home for all to participate in a Jewish community – a community to learn Torah, to worship God, and to improve the world.**

The religious school builds on that mission, providing Torah-based instruction that serves as a guide to living a Jewish life. This includes weekly instruction in Jewish Studies and learning Hebrew both as a sacred biblical language and as the modern day living language of our people. Mandatory service attendance provides a first step towards integrating academic studies with every day Jewish life and lifestyle. We expect our students to actively engage in and pursue Jewish life even after they finish their studies. As it is written in our Torah and repeated regularly in our liturgy; *“You shall love your God with all your mind, with all your strength, and with all your being. Set these words which I command you this day, upon your heart. Teach them faithfully to your children; speak of them in your home and on your way, when you lie down and when you rise up. Bind them as a sign upon your hand; let them be a symbol between your eyes. Inscribe them on the doorposts of your house, and on your gates.”* (Dvarim/Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 - the V’ahavta prayer)

When parents are committed to their child’s and their own active participation in a Jewish community, the Jewish educational experience becomes so much more rewarding to both parent and child. Please join us as a partner in your child’s Jewish education by engaging in the richness of Jewish life and by actively committing to becoming a vital member of the Betenu community.

Sincerely,

The Education Committee
Congregation Betenu

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Religious School Philosophy

Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Educational Philosophy

The goal of Jewish education within the Reform Movement is to deepen Jewish experience and knowledge for all Jews, so as to strengthen their commitment to God, their identification with the Jewish people, their involvement in the Temple, their participation in Jewish life, and their determination to live as Jews.

“ In 1995 the UAHC adopted a resolution called Enrollment Policies in Reform Religious Schools which concerned children from interfaith families. “ Congregation Betenu supports the resolution that “the Reform religious school is a primary pathway for Outreach to interfaith families. As Reform Jews, we welcome interfaith families and encourage them to affirm the Jewish identification of their children.”

This is the official position of Reform Judaism in America. We recognize the child of an interfaith marriage as fully Jewish provided that the parents have agreed to raise their child as a Jew and are following up on that decision.

In keeping with the resolution of the Union for Reform Judaism, enrollment in our religious school is open to

- Children who are being raised and educated exclusively as Jews and
- Children who are not concurrently receiving formal education in another religion.

We assume that any child registered in our religious school is being raised exclusively in the Jewish faith, and that this is a joint decision and commitment on the part of both parents.

If you are struggling with this decision or uncertain of its implications, we urge you to speak with either the rabbi or the Education Committee *before* registering you child in religious school.

-URJ Commission on Reform Jewish Education

Guiding Principles

Congregation Betenu is a member of the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ), and our Religious School builds upon the URJ educational goals. We seek to strengthen the commitment of our students to God and a Jewish way of life according to the following guiding principles:

- **Gemilut Hasidim (Acts of Loving Kindness) and Respect for Others:** We expect our students to meet their responsibilities in doing acts of kindness within the community, as well as treat their teachers and fellow students with respect.
- **Tikkun Olam (Improving the World):** We expect that their study of Judaism will inspire them to find ways to improve the world.
- **Parental Involvement:** We expect that parents will take an active role in their children's education and in the Betenu community.
- **Recognition of Each Child's Special Qualities:** In our school environment, we recognize, appreciate, and bring to fruition the very best qualities that each member of our school community has to offer.

- **Torah, Jewish History, Judaic Culture, Israel:** We teach Judaic culture by studying the Torah, celebrating rituals and holidays, learning about the land of Israel, and studying the history of the Jewish people. We want our students to learn that whenever Jews face adversity and attempts to exterminate us, we, as Jews help one another to meet the challenge to ensure the survival of Judaism.
- **Avodah (Worship):** We teach prayer as a means of coming together with the Betenu community to praise God and better understand what God expects of us.
- **Hebrew Language:** We teach the Hebrew language because it is the spark by which we ignite our lives as Jews; it is a part of our worship, our Jewish culture, and it is the sacred and living language of our people.

Policies and Procedures

Religious School Schedule

There are 30 religious school sessions, and students are required to attend worship services, the number of which varies according to their grade (see p. 6). The religious school meets on Sundays, and is divided into three (3) semesters of ten (10) classes each. Students will receive a progress report, which will also document service attendance, at the end of each trimester and a final report card on the last day of school. Two-thirds of the service requirements should be met by end of the second trimester. (see p. 6).

The school day is as follows:

9:00am - 12:00 am: Grades K-7. Parents must provide snack.

Dismissals

Early Dismissal – Students who must leave early should bring a note from their parents to the Principal explaining who will pick them up and at what time. **No student will be released to a non-custodial adult without a note from the custodial adult.**

Regular Dismissal – **Students will not be allowed to leave the building without an adult. Parents are expected to come into the building to pick up their child.** This ensures the safety of the children and also gives the staff and parents an opportunity to communicate if desired.

School Cancellation

The Principal will make the decision to cancel school due to inclement weather by 7:00 AM on Sunday morning. An email message will be sent out to parents and teachers stating that school has been cancelled for that day. Additionally, closings will be announced on WMUR-TV, and on the synagogue's phone answering system.

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Attendance

Regular attendance reinforces the students' abilities to learn, encourages bonding with the Congregation Betenu community, and provides an atmosphere of continuity. It establishes a routine from which children benefit.

We understand that some absences are unavoidable. Please call the Temple office at (603) 886-1633 if your child will be out of school. Students are expected to make up missed class work. Make up work for absences is available through the classroom teachers. Please contact them when your child is absent, so that your child does not fall behind. (See the staff contact list provided at the end of this Parent Handbook).

If there are 3 or more absences, paid tutoring is available if necessary, in order to make up the missed work. It is the parent's responsibility to arrange for tutors, and names of tutors are available from the Principal.

We are always concerned about the health of our students, and ask that you keep your child at home if the following is present:

- A fever of 99 or greater
- A fever within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours

If the number of absences becomes excessive, we will contact you for a conference and may recommend supplementary tutoring to help the student return to a level of successful achievement.

Class and Service Attendance Requirements

Each student has a minimum required number of classes and services to attend.

	Services	Classes
Grades K, 1 and 2	4 services	27
Grades 3	4 services	27
Grades 4 and 5	7 services	27
Grades 6 and 7	15 services	27

A sign-in sheet, as well as a status chart tracking each student's service attendance is available in the Temple lobby. It is the responsibility of the student and parent(s) to document attendance.

Two-thirds of the service requirements should be met by the end of the second trimester. More than half of the total required services must be attended at Congregation Betenu. For services attended elsewhere, the parent(s) should notify the Principal *in writing* so that attendance is accurately documented and credited. **For the student to become a Bar/Bat Mitzvah, ten (10) services must be attended by the end of the second trimester.** Parents will be expected to petition the Education Committee if this requirement is not met.

Books and Supplies

Students are issued one copy of a textbook or workbook that is being used for each class. If a student loses a book, the replacement will be charged to the parents at the cost that the Temple must pay to replace the book. Students are expected to bring a writing utensil.

Homework

Homework reinforces the concepts learned in class. Students are expected to complete their homework assignments in a timely and satisfactory manner.

Progress and Report Cards

Progress Reports are issued twice a year at the end of each ten (10) week trimester. They should be returned signed the following week. A final Report Card is issued at the end of the year on the last day of school.

Snacks

Please provide your child with a healthy snack and drink from home.

We encourage students to have eaten breakfast before attending school to fuel their brains and bodies.

Although the building is not strictly kosher, all food brought into the building must comply with Congregation Betenu's non-kosher food policy which prohibits pig-derived (including pepperoni pizza) and shellfish products. If in doubt as to what foods may or may not be brought in, contact the Temple office.

Parent Involvement

The parent(s) of Congregation Betenu Religious School students are encouraged to support and participate in Temple-wide events in which students are involved, including the parent hosted class Oneg Shabbat at Friday Evening Services and holiday parties. Services and events are posted electronically weekly and monthly. Be sure you are included on the email list.

Behavioral Expectations

Our school promotes the ideals of self-respect, respect for other human beings, and respect for the special nature of the building and the subjects taught. It is our goal to foster a greater sense of personal responsibility in the student for his/her own behavior (kavod atzmi), and to establish an environment conducive to learning for all students (k'vod hamkom). Students should come to school ready to learn, share, and interact with members of the community.

Our teachers reward appropriate and positive behavior to establish a community of learning in each classroom. We recognize that certain circumstances in the student's life may impact

behavior. Please inform the school of any life change or medical situation that may affect your child's learning or behavior. Each situation will be considered on an individual basis. We adhere to strict policies of confidentiality. Non-compliant or dangerous behaviors will be reported immediately to parents. The safety of all students is of high consideration to the Betenu staff.

Respect for our building is taught by our staff. If a student purposefully damages the property, parents will be informed and reimbursement for damages inflicted may be requested. A parent conference may be requested and scheduled at any time.

Successful Completion of School Year

Students who successfully complete the following minimum requirements will move to the next grade level and will receive credit for successful completion of one (1) year of attendance at Congregation Betenu Religious School:

1. The student must complete the academic requirements and class attendance requirements of each grade level. In case of disagreement, the Principal, Rabbi, and Education committee will arbitrate. Special arrangements can and will be made for learning disabled children and/or special needs children.
2. The student must attend the required number of services for the student's grade level. Parents are responsible for documenting services attended. As previously stated, more than half of the required services need to be at Congregation Betenu, and parents taking children to services at another synagogue must notify the teacher or the rabbi *in writing* to document that they have fulfilled the requirement elsewhere.

Scholarships

The Diantha Gross Educational Endowment Fund provides need-based scholarships to Religious School students.

If you are in need of financial assistance for your children to attend Religious School, please call or email the Betenu office for application forms. All information will remain confidential. Members may apply at any point during the school year.

Curriculum Overview

Grades K and 1

Grades K and 1 are taught using an "open classroom" concept where children work at their own pace and level under the supervision of a teacher and the teacher's assistants. The children study the URJ Mitkadem Hebrew curriculum, CHAI Jewish studies, music, and arts and crafts.

Grades 2 through 7

Jewish Studies and History

Students use the URJ CHAI and Mitkadem curriculum.

Hebrew

The Hebrew language is the spark by which we ignite our lives as Jews. It is integral to our worship service, Jewish culture, and it is the sacred and living language of our people.

The URJ *Mitkadem* program is constructed of 23 *ramot*, or levels. Students may work independently or with other students at a similar level, and/or with a student madrich (aide) in a "tutorial" relationship.

The curriculum includes:

- ❖ Knowledge of the Alef-Bet; consonants, vowels, phonetics, building vocabulary.
- ❖ Ability to parse Hebrew to be able to read words the students have not seen before.
- ❖ Ability to recognize familiar words and to be able to read those with fluency.
- ❖ Prayers that are recited at services, at home, and at Jewish communal celebrations.
- ❖ Understanding the general underlying meaning of the prayers and some modern vocabulary.

Assembly (Music, Prayers & Blessings)

All students will assemble in the Sanctuary for music and further exploration of prayers and blessings.