

THE ILLUMINATOR

Where is my light? My light is in me.
Where is my hope? My hope is in me.
Where is my strength? My strength is in me.
And in you. - Rabbi Sherwin Wine

High Holidays 2006

Rosh Hashanah Evening Service	Sept. 22	7:30 pm.
Rosh Hashanah Morning Service	Sept. 23	10:30 am.
Yom Kippur Kol Nidre Service	Oct. 1	7:30 pm.
Yom Kippur Day Service	Oct. 2	4 pm.
Break the Fast	Oct. 2	6:30 pm.

Check schedule on page 3 for event locations.

Doors open 30 minutes before services, which will begin promptly at announced times.

Rosh Ha-Shanah (New Year), historically a day of judgment, symbolizing the rule of the Jewish god over the earth, inaugurating the new year. The origins are obscure. Celebrated "in the seventh month" of the Hebraic year (which began not in the month of *Tishri* but in the month of *Nisan*), it was "a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Leviticus 23:24).

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), historically a day of fasting and mourning on which individuals account for their deeds, an occasion for reflection on the previous year and the opportunity to start afresh with a clean slate. On this day, the only day considered holier than the Sabbath, an individual's fate is determined by the balance between good and evil actions.

Or Emet's 20th Anniversary!

2006-2007 is the 20th Anniversary of *Or Emet*, believe it or not. Twenty years ago, a small group of like-minded Jewish men and women who had been attending events at the Unitarian Society were searching for the same thing: a way to meet together regularly as Jews to explore and celebrate being Jewish. Like Jews of any congregation, they had strong Jewish identities and wanted to continue their interest and pleasure in Jewish culture, history, and education along with other Jews. Many felt that their social and

ethical values owed much to their lives as Jews. All believed – yes, believed – that they and other human beings are responsible for their own lives. They talked and thought about their Jewish-ness as they did other aspects of their lives – out of experience, learning and understanding. Unfortunately, they had found in traditional Jewish congregations that discussions of life and experience were always couched in some way in the language of the supernatural. Some of these men and women had strong feelings about theism, others did not. What they shared was a desire to experience Jewish life in the language of the world and not in the language of theism.

Fall 2006

Under the leadership of Larry Garfin and Harold Londer, a *havurah* was formed which affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ). Meetings were initially in members' homes. Membership gradually increased and we needed to rent larger space at the Minneapolis Jewish Community Center. We started charging membership dues and we ran informal and then formal budgets. We were no longer a *havurah*, but an affiliate congregation of SHJ, one of dozens across North America. Then came organizational by-laws and an Executive Committee, with Harold as our first President. Soon after, we took the important step of starting a cultural school so that our children could acquire a core Jewish education. This has naturally led to *bar* and *bat mitzvot*. Along the way, we have blown the *shofar*, built *sukkot*, enacted *Hannukah* plays, rattled noisemakers at the sound of Haman's name and conducted communal *seders*. Our adult programming has looked in depth into Jewish history and ethics, Humanistic philosophy, and the primary texts of Judaism. We have hosted SHJ founder, Rabbi Sherwin Wine, Rabbis Miriam Jerris and Ben Biber, Many of *Or Emet's* founders are still members; some have sadly passed on.

Over the next nine months, the congregation will note and celebrate our 20th Anniversary in a number of ways. *The Illuminator* will publish reminiscences of our members, including those of Evelyn Lessin, Dave Zarkin and Phil Griffin in this issue. If you have a special memory, please send it to Mike Persellin at mperse@spacestar.com.

Thank you to Phil Griffin

Three years ago, I was finishing my own third year as congregation president and we needed a successor. We had a natural and attractive candidate on the Executive Committee – someone who had been with *Or Emet* since the early years, who had contributed to our programming and education activities, who had served on the board of Humanists of Minnesota, who had a distinguished career as a writer and teacher of philosophy, and who was admired and well loved by the congregation. But our candidate was reluctant - not because the job was time-consuming and difficult, which it was and is - but because he had not been raised as a Jew. Fortunately, we were able to convince him this was not an impediment and Phil Griffin took the job. I know how hard a job being president is. It is darn hard. Phil did a terrific job at all aspects of being president. He took on greater administrative responsibility and became compassionately involved in all of the congregation's activities. I was particularly pleased that Phil took an interest in maintaining *Or Emet's* close ties with SHJ and the HJ movement. Last but not least, Phil recruited his own terrific successor, new congregation president Margo Fox. Phil thinks *Or Emet* is important and he is right.

- - - Mike Persellin

The *Illuminator* welcomes:

Letters to the editor; essays; poems; humor; announcements of Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, weddings, graduations, and anniversaries; articles; photographs (black and white), if relevant to an article; and appropriate paid advertisements.

Published quarterly.

Dues:	Individuals	\$250
	Families	\$350
	- w/school	\$400
	- add. child	\$40

www.oremet.org

Co-founder and Past President:

Harold Londer

Executive Committee

President: Margo Fox
Margofox10@comcast.net

Vice President: Rich Sonenblum
rsonenblum@logis.org

Treasurer:

Steve Oremland 763-521-4506
1350 Waterford Dr.
Golden Valley, MN 55422
stlorem1@aol.com

At-Large: Harold Londer (2 yr.)
Amy Stubenhaus (1 yr.)

Jewish Cultural School

Amy Stubenhaus Sara Langer
651-644-1864
stubeads@comcast.net

Music

Lionel Davis

Newsletter

Mike Persellin
Box 22513
Robbinsdale, MN 55422
763-535-2226
mperse@spacestar.com

President's Message

It is *Or Emet's* 20th birthday, and it promises to be a great year. We have much to celebrate. And celebrate we will!

As in the past, there'll be opportunities to learn, to share, to grow, to laugh, to work, to play, to reach out, and to eat (of course ☺) together.

I want to thank everyone who has worked this summer on planning for the year. There is still much to accomplish and vacancies on important committees; so, please call or email me if you'd like to be more involved. The saying "You get out of something what you put into it" is true, and it's my hope that **you** plan to get **a lot** out of *Or Emet* this year.

Just two years ago, David and I came to *Or Emet* for the first time for High Holiday services. We didn't know anyone there or what to expect, but we had been attracted by an ad that read, "*Or Emet*, A Home for Wondering Jews." What we found was a wonderful, bright, caring, ethical, diverse and welcoming community. I couldn't have imagined then that I would be in the position to be writing this message to you today.

It will be great to see everyone who can make it on Sunday, September 10th for the first Jewish Cultural School session and the first Adult Program of the year. And not long after we'll be celebrating the High Holidays together.

Why not invite others to join with us? And do let them know how welcome they will be.

- - Margo Fox, President of *Or Emet*

Help Wanted/Needed

Are you interested in chairing or becoming a member of our Membership Committee, Jewish Cultural School Committee, or Publicity/PR Committee? If so, call Margo at 651-699-6302.

"Let's Get Together!"

How about emailing *Or Emet* members to join you for conversation, coffee, dinner out, a play, a movie, a concert? So many interesting people! So little time!

Thank you for a donation from **Judith Lippold** in memory of her mother, **Shulamite Hurwitz Rosenthal**.

Or Emet is affiliated with the Society for Humanistic Judaism (SHJ) and the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews .

Humanistic Judaism is a voice for Jews who value their identity and who seek an alternative to conventional Judaism.

Humanistic Judaism rejects supernatural authority and affirms the rights of individuals to control and be responsible for their own lives.

The Society for Humanistic Judaism mobilizes individuals to celebrate Jewish identity and culture in a manner consistent with humanistic philosophy.

Or Emet Fall 2006 Schedule

	Time	Location	Event
September			
Sunday 10	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Adult Program: "Being Positive in a Fearful World." Erica Fishman and Rich Sonenblum
Friday 22	7:30 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Rosh Hashanah Evening Service
Saturday 23	10:30 am.	Home of Faith and Steve Oremland	Rosh Hashanah Morning Service and Pot Luck Lunch
October			
Sunday 1	7:30 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Yom Kippur Kol Nidre Service
Monday 2	4 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Yom Kippur Day Service
Monday 2	6:30 pm.	Home of Jan Withers/Harold Londer	Break the Fast
Sunday 8	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Adult Program: Community Based Projects in a Global World. Paul Moss, Co-Founder Cottonwood Foundation
Sunday 8		Home of Amy Stubenhaus/Prentiss Cox	Building of the Sukkah
Friday 20	7:30 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Shabbat Service and Program: "The Holocaust in Film." Alan Miller
Saturday 28	7-9 pm.	Home of Jan Withers/Harold Londer	Havdalah and Pot Luck
November			
Sunday 5	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Adult Program: "My Journey to Humanistic Judaism." Allan Malkis
Friday 17	7:30 pm.	Sabes Mpls. JCC	Shabbat Service and Program: "Ethical Wills – Putting Your Values on Paper." Dr. Barry Baines
December			
Sunday 3	10 am.	Friends School	Cultural School and Program: "Marc Chagall: From the Shtetl to Eternity." Jane Katz and Others
Friday 15	to be announced	to be announced	Shabbat Service and Cultural School Hannukah Party

Minneapolis Sabes JCC is located at 4330 Cedar Lake Rd. in St. Louis Park.

Minnesota Friends School is located at 1365 Englewood Ave. in St. Paul.
Use the Albert Street entrance.

All Or Emet Programs are free and open to the public. A Humanistic Jewish service precedes Friday evening programs and an Oneg follows.

Congregation News

If you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there. - - Thomas Carlyle

Congregation Finances – 2006-2007 Budget and Dues

Last year, *Or Emet* significantly improved its financial status. In a year that saw large increases in costs, especially in the areas of venue rentals, we had a year of positive cash flow thanks to the generosity of members who gave donations and/or extraordinary amounts of their time. As we approach 2007, we see some additional cost increases and the need to use a very limited but increased amount of paid help with our Jewish Cultural School and to administer and promote our congregation.

To prevent a deficit budget, the Executive Committee has decided to raise dues. This decision was not made easily, but only after reviewing the dues structure of similar SHJ affiliates and finding *Or Emet* at the low end. Dues for 2006 -2007 are: Single Member - \$250; Family - \$350; Family with one child in JCS - \$400; Each additional child in JCS - \$40. You should have received a letter and a registration form in the mail. If you did not please email Steve Oremland at slorem1@aol.com.

Your involvement is more important than your money. We do not want anyone who is under severe financial constraints to be precluded from belonging to *Or Emet* or a child from attending our cultural school. Our treasurer, Steve Oremland, can be contacted with complete confidentiality to request financial relief. Steve can be reached at 763-521-4506

Music Plans for *Or Emet's* Coming Year

Choir for High Holidays to rehearse on September 6, 11 and 13.

1. Special Hannukah music in December
2. Spring: a *Shabbat* musical service featuring Jewish music by *Or Emet* members

We wish all *Or Emet* members with musical skills would participate in our programming. Call **Lionel Davis** at 612-825-4362. There is a place for you.

Past President's Reflections

They say that you never really know a thing until you become responsible for it. I know that is true for a baby or a puppy, but I found it surprisingly true for *Or Emet*. I had been a member of the congregation since shortly after it began. It had been my place to do the odd jobs that came up, but never anything very demanding. But becoming president gave me the necessity for taking on the final responsibility for the details of every part of the life of the organization. I found that there was much more to be done than I had realized, and that it took the work and care of many people to keep things running well. I found that there were members who had been functioning very well with their part of the responsibilities and hardly anyone noticed. I tried to keep out of their way and help if needed.

It was also my pleasure to see several others take on specific tasks and thrive with them. This was the part I enjoyed most. I hope that everyone who worked so diligently while I was president had the satisfaction of seeing themselves as part of a significant movement. *Or Emet* and the Society for Humanistic Judaism have an important purpose in our community and in the nation. The tides of change are flowing in the direction of our strengths. We do not know what the future holds for our congregation nor for our world, but we are in the right place to serve important purposes: the generations of inter-cultural and inter-gendered families that will perpetuate and promote progressive Jewish values.

It has been my good fortune to be a part of *Or Emet*. Thank you for that privilege. - - Phillip Griffin

Save the Environment and Help *Or Emet*

Every time you attend an *Or Emet* function you will have an opportunity to help *Or Emet* and reduce environmental waste by donating your used ink jet and laser printer as well as copier toner cartridges. Just bring them to any *Or Emet* Friday evening or Sunday morning event and leave them in a box that will be provided. The cartridges must be "virgin cartridges" - that is, cartridges that have never been refilled. Generally, this means they have the printer manufacturer's label, and do not have a hole drilled in them. Most cartridges from Apple, Brother, Canon, Compaq, Dell, HP, IBM, Lexmark, Panasonic, Pitney Bowes, Ricoh, Samsung, Sharp and Xerox. While many are only worth \$1 or \$2, some have values as high as \$18 each.

Springtime at *Or Emet*: Congregation Celebrates Five Rites of Passage

The number five has symbolic meaning because it reminds us of the Five Books of Moses and Jewish mystical writings. But no supernatural guide was present when five bright and highly motivated *Or Emet* youngsters, all in Mona Fenichel's class in the Jewish Cultural School and participants in Harold Londer's Bar and Bat Mitzvah program, celebrated their *B'nai Mitzvot* in the Spring of 2006. Each *Or Emet* Bar or Bat Mitzvah ceremony, created by the student under the tutelage of Dr. Londer, has its own distinct character. Each begins with a service including Hebrew songs, and readings by friends and family affirming Jewish and humanist values.



At the first of these events in April, 2006, **Leah Fox Liberman** read her Torah portion from Leviticus in Hebrew and in English. Later, Leah told me why she made this choice: "My father lived in Israel and speaks Hebrew. I enjoy the language. I wanted to do this to honor him and my relatives who came from all over Israel, and for myself. Harold Londer and my tutor helped me with the Hebrew. My Torah portion was about sacrifice of animals. It was hard to realize that I make sacrifices - dieting is a time to get an education; we sacrifice for other people, so Torah is really a part of a group here at *Or Emet*. I like Humanism because I believe people have to make their own decisions in life."

In May, **Ian Gorodisher** and **Reed Monson** celebrated their *B'nai Mitzvot* at the Science Museum in St. Paul. Ian demonstrated that brains, computer competency and enthusiasm can be combined in one 13 year-old package as he talked about the life and work of Albert Einstein, and gave an original power point presentation on his hero and role model. Reed talked about Judaism and Nature, focusing on the importance of nature in many biblical stories. "In the story of the ten plagues (Exodus), he said, "natural events affected the people. In the story of Noah's Arc, Noah protected people and animals from the flood, allowing them to survive." Reed showed an original slide show depicting his favorite scenes in nature, and Chagall paintings inspired by Jewish holidays. "These holidays have a strong connection to nature."

Gaia Ramsdell and **Devon Cox** held their *Bat Mitzvot* celebrations in June. Gaia, a violinist, gave a talk about a woman from a Polish *shtetl* who overcame religious, economic, gender, and age barriers to become a revered international concert violinist. "She inspires me because she lives for music -- music is her Torah," said Gaia. Along with her talk, Gaia played Achron's *Hebrew Melody* and a *Modzitzer Nigun* (a Chassidic devotional melody) on her violin. She told me that, after playing, she noticed the stillness in the audience. Said Gaia, "Taking part in the *bat mitzvah* made me feel like I'd earned a place in the *Or Emet* community. It felt right." Devon presented "*The Young and the Godless*," a multi-media production which she developed based on interviews with young people who are both agnostics and atheists. Said one young interviewee in the film: "People don't trust those who don't believe in god because they're afraid of anyone who is different." Said another, Eva Cohen, a former student in the *Or Emet* program: "So what if you look up at the sky and think 'blue' instead of god . . . You have to find a belief system that is rational which works for you. I have to find my own purpose in life."

I found each of these events to be meaningful and at times, truly moving, and I applaud the creativity and commitment of Leah, Ian, Reed, Gaia and Devon. Congratulations also to Harold Londer, beloved teacher and mentor, and to the parents who nurtured and supported their kids in their endeavors: Regan and David, Susannah and Ilya, Sarah and Bruce, Stephanie, Amy and Prentiss. -- *Jane Katz*

2006-2007 JCS Schedule and Events

September 10, 2006
 October 8, 2006
 (and a Succoth party - check calendar for more details)
 November 5, 2006
 December 3, 2006
 (Hannukah program as noted below)
 January 7, 2007
 February 4, 2007
 (Tu B'Shevat program plus a Tu B'Shevat "seder")
 March 4, 2007
 (including a Purim celebration)
 April 15, 2007
 April 29, 2007
 May 20, 2007
 June 3, 2007

On Friday, December 15, everyone's invited to a family Shabbat Service and Hannukah Party. Stay tuned!

SHJ News

Rabbi Jerris Given Lifetime Achievement Award

As a leader of the Society for Humanistic Judaism for the past 35 years, **Rabbi Miriam Jerris** has maintained that people are not just at the center of a Humanistic Jewish philosophy, they are the very heart of the movement. Reaching out to individuals and congregations, she has been instrumental in organizing communities from San Diego to Portland, New York to Florida, in Minnesota, Arizona, and beyond. On April 28, at the Society's annual conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Rabbi Jerris became the recipient of this year's **Sherwin T. Wine Lifetime Achievement Award**, honoring years of work exemplified by dedication, devotion, adherence to and activity in the Secular Humanistic Judaism Movement. The award was established by Bert Steinberg, a member of SHJ and San Francisco's *Kol Hadash* congregation, in 2003 in honor of the 75th birthday of the movement's founder, Rabbi Sherwin T. Wine.

In 1972, Rabbi Jerris served as the national President of the Society prior to becoming SHJ's first Executive Director from 1980 to 1995. She is currently the Society's Community Development Coordinator. Jerris has a doctorate in Jewish studies, a master's degree in Near Eastern studies, and a master's degree in humanistic and clinical psychology. Ordained as a *madrikha* in 1988, Jerris was ordained as a rabbi in 2001 by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism. She is a member of its faculty. Jerris has served on the boards of most movement organizations and is currently the vice president of the Association of Humanistic Rabbis. A specialist working with Jewish intermarried families, she has officiated at hundreds of weddings and baby celebrations, led dozens of intermarriage workshops and seminars, spoken to Jewish organizations, and is a regular contributor to www.interfaithfamily.com, a web magazine serving the intermarried population. Jerris has raised two children in Humanistic Judaism.

Reflecting on her rabbinate, Rabbi Jerris cites five key characteristics that have shaped her role as a leader, teacher, and mentor: 1) *tikkun halev*, healing the existential pain of human existence through compassion; 2) supporting people to accept responsibility for themselves and the goals they wish to achieve; 3) nurturing Jewish identity; 4) increasing Jewish literacy; 5) being open to creative alternatives as they relate to liturgy and celebrations.

Rabbi Jerris' personal philosophy resonated with this year's conference theme, "Thinking Outside the Box: Building, Growing and Inspiring Humanistic Jewish Communities."

(I cannot imagine a more exciting Israel experience. Rabbi Wine is a superb tour leader. - - MP)

Dear Friends:

The war in Lebanon and Gaza has highlighted the dangers which Israel confronts in this expanding world of Muslim hatred and terrorism. The people in Israel need to know that we Jews in the diaspora stand with them in unity and solidarity.

At the end of December an historic event is taking place in Jerusalem. Nine Secular Humanistic rabbis will be ordained. They are pioneers. They will be the first Israelis to serve as rabbinic leaders for our movement. They are already beginning to change the religious and cultural landscape of the Jewish State under the guidance of Rabbi Sivan Maas and her father Professor Yaakov Malkin.

An eight day mission of solidarity has been created by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism and the International Federation of Secular Humanistic Jews. We will go to Israel as leaders and members of our movement to express support for our brothers and sisters in the Jewish State. We will meet with Israeli leaders and opinion makers. We will travel to the North, under the guidance of our new Israeli rabbis. We will visit important sites of political and historic significance. Above all, despite the trauma, we will celebrate the ordination of the rabbis at the Shrine of the Book. Our voyage will be an expression of confidence and hope in the future of Israel.

I hope that you will choose to come. Your presence will strengthen our link with the Jewish State, a message of needed support, and intensify our connection with our ideological 'family' at a great moment in their history. It will also provide you with a profoundly meaningful experience filled with discovery and friendship.

- - - Sherwin T. Wine

- Meetings with Israeli Leaders and Opinion Makers
- Discussions with Israelis Confronting the Crisis
- Three Day Mission to the North
- Three Days in Jerusalem
- One Day Experience in Tel Aviv
- First Ordination of Secular Humanistic Rabbis in Israel at the Israel Museum
- Encounter with A.B. Yehoshua, Israel's greatest Writer
- Celebrating a Secular Humanistic *Shabbat* in Jerusalem
- Seminar with Curator Adolfo Roitman at Shrine of the Book

Accommodation in Five Star Hotels

Transportation: Every mission member will arrange his/her own transportation to Tel Aviv by air, arriving no later than Wednesday morning, December 20. This will enable participants to utilize frequent flyer miles. Taxis are available to take mission members to the first day's activities in Jerusalem. Once in Jerusalem, the mission begins. Buses or vans will be provided until the departure from Tel Aviv.

Cost: \$1900 per person, which includes a tax deductible \$200 contribution to the Israeli Rabbinic Program of the International Institute.

WE STAND WITH ISRAEL

SHJ Board of Directors Resolution

As Humanistic Jews:

- We reaffirm our solidarity and support of the people of Israel and of the right and responsibility of Israel to defend its citizens. The State of Israel is under attack. We reaffirm our support for the continued existence and defense of Israel. The future of the State of Israel must be secured.
- We support Israel, the United States, and others in their efforts to combat terrorism. We encourage the United States to take a vigorous stand in bringing Israel, the Palestinians, and other involved parties to the negotiating table. We support a negotiated solution that assures a secure State of Israel and a demilitarized sovereign Palestinian state.
- We support the efforts to find a solution that will bring peace with justice to the entire region.

Search and Donate to SHJ

SHJ supporters can now donate money to the Society as often as they like, and it will not cost them a thing. By using *goodsearch.com* as a search engine, you can earn about \$.01 per search for Humanistic Judaism.

1. Go to *www.goodsearch.com*.
2. Type in the key words "Humanistic Judaism" into the "I Support" box and click on "verify." SHJ's full title will show in the box.
3. Search the internet just as you would with any other search engine.

Goodsearch.com was founded by a brother and sister who lost their mother to cancer and wanted to find a way for people to support their favorite causes. For more information on how it works and how you can make it profitable for SHJ, go to the web site and also use it. You can also check the box that shows the number of SHJ users.

Lou Altman New SHJ President

Lou Altman was installed as President of SHJ at its Annual Conference in Boston in April. Lou is a lifelong humanist and has been active in SHJ for over 30 years. He is a patent, copyright and trademark attorney, law professor and author of legal treatises. Lou and his wife Ellie live in Northbrook, Illinois and winter in Sarasota, Florida.

Or Emet Executive Committee

Congregational Goals Set

Increase dialogue opportunities at Friday and Sunday meetings.

The program committee has included more such meetings and has requested guest presenters to leave adequate time for discussion.

Be more welcoming to new people.

This is a major role for the Membership Chair. Until that position is filled we must all make sure that we welcome all new people.

Update and centralize email and mailing lists.

The Administrative Assistant will be assigned this as a major element of the job. In the interim the Treasurer maintains the mailing lists and the President the email list.

Improve the web site.

This is being looked into.

Strengthen the *Or Emet* sense of community.

Utilizing the "sign-up sheets" and last year's survey data, we are attempting to recruit everyone into an active roll.

Build an exciting JCS curriculum.

Adopt a theme for the year in the school and in programming. A proposal will be made to the School Committee to adopt a five-year rolling curriculum to begin in September 2007.

Improve PR.

This is also a major role of the Administrative Assistant and the need for some professional resource were identified. A call for help will be inserted in the Newsletter.

Create more opportunities to have good times together.

We have added a number of events to the calendar this year.

Empower the members.

An article will be inserted in the Newsletter suggesting members consider emailing the congregation to invite others to join them for a play, a concert, a dinner out, or a film.

Create a way to address important member needs.

The Member Support Committee will provide the focus for this.

Find ways to involve teens and young adults.

A number of this year's events have that specific goal.

Grow and retain membership.

This was recognized as a critical goal. A completion of the PR goal was seen as the beginning.

Secure adequate funding.

This was agreed as a goal.



Humanistic Jews of Minnesota
C/O Mike Persellin
Box 22513
Robbinsdale, MN 55422

20th Anniversary Memories

Dave Zarkin Remembers

After a rather nasty break with the Reform congregation in St. Paul, I was open to a new "affiliation" when my late friend Jerry Singer suggested an organizational meeting for the new Humanistic congregation at the St. Paul JCC. I never really connected at traditional congregations although I made various attempts, joining a Conservative temple in Boise and going to High Holiday Services at a movie theater with a singles group in Van Nuys, Ca. I went to the meeting and decided I wanted to learn more about Humanistic Judaism because I never really signed on to traditional Judaism, although I was raised in a rather confusing Conservative and then Reform family. My son argued that it was a contradiction -- Judaism without God -- but I was not deterred. The counter culture element attracted me. Later we met at Norma and Larry Garfin's house and I was impressed with the congeniality of the group and the fact that we were politically compatible as far as I could tell. My first Humanistic High Holidays service was quite a contrast to present day *Or Emet* High Holiday services. Harold Londer was in the back of the room huddled over a small cassette player trying to play a recording of Neil Diamond singing *Kol Nidre* from the miserable remake of the movie "The Jazz Singer." Later I suggested that I could provide a recording of *Kol Nidre* by Jan Pierce, but by then we had upgraded to live music and recordings were *passé*. As for my friend Jerry, he lost interest in *Or Emet* as

his health failed and his memorial service was at Temple Israel although I never remember him attending services there.

Evelyn Lessin Remembers

I know that some of you, Or Emet members, have heard my story already, but I feel I have to repeat it for this anniversary year. We (now it is just I) have been members for about 15 years. I remember our first meeting - Rabbi Wine was the speaker and as I sat there listening I kept saying to myself "I didn't know there was such a thing as Humanistic Judaism." The more I learned about it the more I knew this was so right for me. I was raised with absolutely no religion and that was okay for me. I did know about chicken soup and gefilte fish, I guess that's why we were once called "gastronomic Jews." But as I learned more about Secular Humanist Judaism I realized the importance of knowing about the Jewish culture, history, the meaning of the holidays. To quote Rabbi Wine "Humanistic Judaism offers a meaningful way of bringing action and belief together in the celebration of Jewish identity in the twenty-first century." And, of course, a very important part of my belonging to Or Emet is the people. I have made some wonderful friends and so appreciate their being there for me whenever I need them. And now there are 2nd generation and even 3rd generation members to keep Or Emet going for many more years.

For *The Illuminator* online
and updates on all our
activities,
check our website.

Or Emet Online
www.oremet.org