



Kehilat Pardes

The Rock Creek Synagogue

Your Aspen Hill Community Synagogue
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September 4, 2024

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Dear Kehilat Pardes Community,

I'm writing to you with immense pride as I share how much we've accomplished in 5784. Most importantly, our new arrivals: we've welcomed a RECORD 15 (FIFTEEN!) new households! This growth is a testament to our unique, diverse, and incredibly warm and welcoming kehillah.

Please make sure to welcome all the new community members who moved in this past year: Dr. Eliot and Judy Cohen, Dr. Talia Greenstein and Dov Hochzstein, Kenny Gerber and Chana Penini, Temima Katz, Stefanie Kraus, Ari and Chava Miller, Jen Miller, Danny Pecoraro and Rebecca Lipson, Eliana and Samara Lewinson, Ron and Rachel Mersky, Moshe Stern and Abby Figat, Rabbi Avi Schwartz and Dr. Britany Weissman, Moshe Schonbrun, Kfir and Dee Gamliel, and Michal and Alexander Rotberg. Stay tuned for an Ushpizin initiative that will help us invite our new members to meals!

This growth is not by chance, but rather as a result of our amazing leadership and innovative programming. This year, under Jackie Burman's leadership, supported by the contributions of so many of us, we came together as a community at meaningful events like our evening with Carmiya Weinraub's Interfaith Comedy group (with Rabbi Uri's interfaith and interdenominational colleagues as surprise guests!), and an event with Aleeza Ben Shalom from Netflix's Jewish Matchmaker. Heavy snow and scheduling conflicts couldn't stop us from culminating our Tops10 series with a classy "Fancy Friday" to pay tribute to Rabbi Uri and Dahlia for 10 incredible years of spiritual leadership!

Even as we celebrate our growth and milestones, the conflict in Israel continues to weigh heavily on our hearts and minds as we are still reeling from the events of the past year. However, thanks to our community's strength and resilience, we came together to comfort each other and to show our support in many ways, such as by making hostage bracelets or attending the Israel Rally. With support from each other, our community can truly persevere through it all. As we approach the anniversary of October 7, we invite you to participate in several meaningful events that will allow us to commemorate this difficult date as a community (more details enclosed). As we think about the safety and security of Jewish communities in Israel, we are also thinking about security in our shul differently by hosting a security training series and a security drill during davening on September 21 (more details enclosed).

We are beyond thankful for our shul staff who continue to support us through all circumstances. And as of this past year, we're tremendously grateful to highlight our fully staffed shul! Jacob Scharf (aka "Reb Jake") hit the ground running as our new youth director, providing the structure and programming for our children that we desperately needed. Lily Landau stepped down from her role as KP Administrative Assistant earlier this year after serving our shul for many years with her excellent work and dedication. We deeply miss having Lily in the office. However, we're grateful to

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"!Rabbi Akiva taught: 'And You Shall Love Your Neighbor Like Yourself' – This is a great principle in the Torah"

have found Alicia Powell who just stepped into the role in March and has been skillfully organizing many details for our shul programming and finances. I would also like to recognize our other hard-working staff: Rabbi Uri, Bill Blankson, Morah Maria, Morah Eva, and the rest of the childcare team. They all work diligently to support our community and individual needs, and I encourage you to join me in extending gratitude to all our staff members whenever you can.

Just since June, we've done so much: We've voted in a fantastic new board, marked Bill Blankson's 70th birthday, and celebrated G'daliah Levinson as he commemorated the anniversary of his bar mitzvah by leynung and delivering a d'var torah in ASL. After many years of dutifully arriving to shul early and running davening, David Zakar began his transition off of the gabbai team and has already been planning a special new teen minyan that will launch this November. We are so grateful for his commitment and look forward to celebrating his many years of service at a special Shabbat luncheon on December 14. Thank you so much to David Charlton who recently stepped up as Gabbai Rishon, and to our other gabbaim, Rabba Aliza Libman Baronofsky and Meena Viswanath. I look forward to marking many more special transitions and occasions with you in the new year. Please review all the enclosed flyers for important updates on upcoming classes and events.

Our community relies on our incredible staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to run and support all of its many moving parts. It would be impossible to name them all, which is why we're happy to have instituted a Hakarat Hatov initiative spearheaded by our chair, Rachel Infeld. Rachel kicked off her work this fall and has been doing so much to sustain and lift our volunteers and staff by recognizing them for their efforts through her special notes and gifts, as well as through the new Omer Hakarat Hatov Initiative. It has been an important exercise to work towards properly accounting for everyone's service to our shul. While we know it is likely impossible to acknowledge the innumerable contributions we all make for KP, we strive to always do better and hold ourselves accountable in this effort.

We aim to show appreciation to our volunteers throughout the entire year, and we'd like to recognize three families this Simchat Torah for their great commitment to KP. We highly encourage you to sponsor a special luncheon in their honor (more details enclosed). This year, our Simchat Torah honorees will be:

Chatan Torah: Mark Dredze

Chatan/Kallah Bereishit: Aharon and Avigail Charnov

Kol HaNearim: Shira and Max Neumann

To close, I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has generously donated their time and money to our kehillah. We would not be in our current position without all of you. We've witnessed incredible growth, and we're now at a pivotal point where we need to pay extra attention to both welcoming our many new members but also to our financial sustainability and independence. I plan to share more on this topic during our annual Yom Kippur appeal.

Wishing you a Shana Tova on behalf of the entire KP-RCS Board! May the new year bring us peace, hope, and meaning to our community and all of Israel.

Shanah Tova U'metuka,

Erin Ring
KP Board President

If you have not yet paid for your 2024 membership, you may do so at www.kehilatpardes.org/membership.

To celebrate s'machot and remember yarzheits through Kiddush and Seudah Shlishit sponsorships, or to make a donation, please visit www.kehilatpardes.org/donate.

אמר רבי עקיבא: "וְאֶהְבֶּתְ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ – זֶה כָּלל גְּדוֹל בַּתּוֹרָה"

"!Rabbi Akiva taught: 'And You Shall Love Your Neighbor Like Yourself' – This is a great principle in the Torah"