

SIM SHALOM ANNUAL REPORT - 2010

BIGGEST NEWS

After three and a half years of camping out in the extra spaces of the Balint House JCC, Sim Shalom Congregation is very excited and grateful to again have its own premises. It is in a former seven room flat in a very pleasant apartment house in a rapidly redeveloping section of Pest. The apartment is on the second floor and overlooks a lively street filled with trendy restaurants, galleries and coffee houses. We have knocked out the walls between three of the rooms overlooking the street to make a large prayer room, able to seat 70-80 people. Lit by beautiful chandeliers, and with resonant acoustics to enhance the music of our cantor and chanted prayers, it is a very spiritual place in which to pray. There is a large combined library and school room, used for the Talmud Torah, and also by the rabbi for her consultations, an office for the secretary, a kitchen for food preparation, and a central hall for things like Kiddush and other celebrations, as well as a place to hang out and schmooze. We were unsuccessful, in the present financial downturn, in raising money for buying a property, but our financial situation has improved enough, that with the help of some generous donations from our members, we are able to afford the rent for this fine place.

It is such a pleasure to have a space which we control, and where we can expand our programs in order to build up the size of the congregation. All our books and art works are out of storage and back on the walls and the shelves, so we can use and enjoy them. The Rabbi no longer has to meet people in coffee houses or at home for consultations. Balint House was good when we had no other place to go, but our own home is so much better! We had two dedications; one in February for our own members and friends just after we moved in, and the other in May that was more public, and allowing time to invite friends and guests from abroad. At the latter, we dedicated our new Bimah, donated to us by Jeffery and Joyce Rose and Detti Gardos and her family. For the first time we have a proper place from which to read the Torah. In fact one of our big pleasures is that we now have our Torah in the synagogue, and not stored in another building blocks away, so we can easily read from it whenever we wish, and the frequency of Torah services has greatly increased.

The new space has already led to the start of several new programs. Immediately after we moved in last February, a class for Hebrew language beginners was started for those new members who had difficulty following the services. This fall, a second Talmud Torah class was started for those children who were too young when the first class started. In the area of adult education, by popular demand, the Rabbi has started a class to study the Chassidic Tales of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. For our teenagers, there is now a biweekly study program with the Rabbi called Palachinta, Torah and Us. Palachinta are basically crepes filled with something sweet! And it is hoped that soon a monthly Book and Film club will get started under the leadership of one of our more literary members.

Other information on our continuing programs and activities is given below.

SIM SHALOM PROGRAMS AND INFORMATION

Regular programs: Our programs are listed on our monthly newsletter and our website (www.sim-shalom.org).

Services

Kabbalat Shabbat services (three Friday nights per month) - app. 20-25 pers – often with groups and guests from abroad.

Shacharit services (every second Saturday) - app. 15-20 pers.

Our Festivals Attendance ranges from 50 to 120 people per event for High Holidays, Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Hanukka, Tu b'Shvat., Purim, and Passover Seder.

Lectures, classes, workshops

Hebrew & Liturgy Class at advanced level (every Saturday morning) app. 10 pers.
Beginning Hebrew is also taught once a week at two different levels --11 pers. total

Torah Study (every second Saturday morning) - app. 15-20 pers.

Oneg Shabbat (one Friday per month) – attendance depends on the program and/or the special guests (for example writers, artists, interesting people, etc) - app. 15-30 pers.

(in 2010/11) – Rabbi's Class on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. app. 12-18 pers.

Talmud Torah (every second Sunday). After two years of a single class, this year we are starting a second class. 9 pupils

Youth Group for teenagers; photo and cemetery cleanup projects, fun and some study. app 8-10 kids.

Judaica Handcraft classes for adults (once a month). Home made Judaica; Silk painting, glass decorating, etc.

Irregular programs:

- Sim Shalom plays a significant part in the annual Limmud/Hungary conferences (now in its fifth year), Hungary's version of the very popular Limmud Conferences in the UK. This year Rabbi Kelemen and Peter Radvanski, a congregational member who is a Rabbinic student at the Leo

Baeck College in London gave several lectures and shiurim and took part in two round table discussions. A Board member helped with the children's program. Attendees of the conference are mainly from the Reform and Modern Orthodox movements, plus many assimilated Jews with no affiliation. A few people from the majority Neolog movement also attend.

- We are active in an Association of Small Congregations which includes one Muslim, three Buddhist, one Hindu and one Unitarian congregation. It promotes Interfaith activities and lobbies the government for support similar to that given to the major religious faiths.
- Flower market and bake sale fund raisers for charity purposes. Most recently we raised enough to contribute a new window for the renovation of the hospital rooms at the Budapest Hospice.
- Family Retreat Camp (a long weekend Shabbaton, often in a JCC Camp in South Hungary) - 80 pers.
- **Information Sources** - Visit numbers for Aug.-Sept.-Oct., 2007
Hungarian website (www.szimsalom.hu): 1200 visits from 800 visitors (average: 4 pages/visit)
English website (www.sim-shalom.org): 350 visits from 280 visitors (average 3.7 pages/visit)

BASIC HUNGARIAN JEWISH STATISTICS

80-100,000 Hungarians identify themselves as “Jewish”

6500 Hungarians give financial support to a Jewish religious institution. The Neolog movement (orthodox light) is the largest with 5000 contributors.

400 people are on the Sim Shalom mailing list

220 give financial support to Sim Shalom

120-150 attend Sim Shalom major holiday celebrations

75-100 attend other Sim Shalom programs during the year.