

Rabbi Daniel G. Zemel
Temple Micah Annual Meeting 2025

It was a Micah year filled with learning, activism, culture, and robust conversation.

Lunch and Learn

Wise Aging

Choir

Singing circles

Drumming Circles

Discovery Circles

Sacred Circle Dancing

Micah Cooks

Book club

Torah Study

Bnai Mitzvah

Adult education of all manner.

Machon

Global Warming engagement

to name but a few.

This list is so incomplete and for that I apologize if your project is not included—but wait—I have just begun.

Micah was non-stop all year.

This year we participated led by a strong team that mobilized us for the World Zionist Congress elections. Elise and Steve Weinstein led this effort for us but I

want to take a moment to thank everyone that participated. We are all awaiting the results of this already disputed with charges of corruption contest but we can be proud that Micah truly rose to the effort to encourage our congregation to vote.

Succath Shalom also had a very active year.

Just in the last few months, Sukkat Shalom has been involved in welcoming two Afghan families to the area. In December 2024, Sukkat Shalom did a complete apartment set up for the Reshta-Sayedi family -- four adults and three teenagers resettled by the IRC. While other congregations and groups are also working with the family, Micah volunteers have provided funds, tutoring, medical care, and other services to ease the family's transition to the US. In March, the Turksoy family arrived -- two parents and three active little boys ages 1-1/2 to 5. Sukkat Shalom is fully sponsoring this family through HIAS's Welcome Circles program. Through the work of many hands, the Turksoys are settling into a fully-decked-out apartment in the Silver Spring apartment complex that also houses the Rasooli and Amiri families. The parents are both taking English classes, and the two older children have been enrolled in school for the fall.

In other happy news, Maleka Rasooli, the young mother in the first family Temple Micah resettled, achieved her dream of becoming a US citizen just last week when she passed her naturalization test. Her Micah friends will celebrate her achievement after her swearing-in ceremony this summer.

As we consider Succath Shalom—please remember our plan for this Friday at 5:50 outside the synagogue building where we will dedicate our REMEMBER THE ST LOUIS banner on the 86th anniversary of that ship being turned away from American shores. Rabbi Sarah Bassin from HIAs will be with us.

Storefront

The Storefront Project had a great year--its sixth!--making an impact in three ways.

First, **Storefront Young Families** continued to host monthly gatherings in public

spaces, creating accessible entry points for people who might not walk into a synagogue but are still seeking Jewish connection. I went to one with my grandchildren--a program in the back room of a brewery--and the energy was... It reminded me how important it is to reach beyond our walls.

Second, **Storefront Sounds**--a new project of Storefront showing Storefront's continued ability to innovate-- brought the spirit of Jewish music from our sanctuary into the public square. We held a sold-out concert at the Atlas Theater in NorthEast, featuring both Jewish and Palestinian musicians. The crowd was diverse. The next night, those same musicians brought their sound to our sanctuary--proof that Storefront not only reaches outward, but also feeds back into our own community.

Third, **Sacred Milestones**...

Rabbi Crawley has continued leading Storefront's Sacred Milestones effort. Most notably, she has developed a partnership with the Capital Jewish Museum, where she teaches an 18-week class for anyone who is exploring Judaism for any reason. The class uses her curriculum, which addresses the big ideas of Judaism, and uses the exhibits in the museum for an experiential way to spark conversation. She has also continued her life cycle mentoring, guiding 15+ people through conversion this year, partnering with Sixth & I on their Jewish Welcome Workshop, and hosted several modern Ketubah writing workshops.

As we note all these endeavors, I want to make a special comment and thanks to those of us here who are so devoted to Micah House. Our Micah House effort goes all the way back to 1989. I cannot thank you enough for maintaining this very special home in our name which continues to offer dignity, recovery and a home to so many for so many years. You are heroes.

I don't think that I am the only one who felt that our Micah music reached new heights this year as Rabbi Slakman joined by Philip Mayer brought music and an

array of musicians into our Jewish lives that was beyond anything of which we might have ever dreamt or imagined. Our spirits soared, our emotions unlocked – we felt deeply in a whole new way what prayer offered our souls and this all happened when our souls were deeply in need of this nourishment –this soul saving. We thank Rabbi Slakman and Philip for lifting us in this way.

This year was so full.

The transition committee and its array of sub-committees created a retirement year for me and my family that was far beyond anything of which I might have dreamt as we remember now:

-The High Holy Days brought us Liz Lerman AND Diana Butler Bass.

-Going back to last September, we offered thru the year three panels discussions under the theme Imagining the Jewish Future. The panels were moderated by my dear colleagues, Rabbis Beraha, Slakman and Crawley. The panelists were an array of the best and brightest of the Jewish world and came from both across the country and across the globe.

-You invited me to offer a weekend on the teachings and scholarship of Grandpa Goldman. Just this request brought me to tears but the gift that went with it— opportunities to research his extensive archives in Cincinnati is beyond generous.

-The Rabbi Larry Hoffman weekend was another gift. His teaching has come to truly inform our community's soul.

-The Gala was the stuff that only dreams are made of. Every aspect of it was a loving work of art. The baseball cards!

-The Louise Shabbat

- Your generosity of your gifts—these are truly beyond measure.

All of this leaves me deeply grateful to this entire community.

This is my last annual report.

I want to therefore especially thank the Board –please rise—

(David Wentworth going off the board as treasurer)

and give special recognition to Rielle Miller Gabriel our outgoing president. Rielle—simply thank you for everything.

I want to again thank my colleagues with whom I have the privilege of working every single day. I want you to know how much you mean to me. I hope that you do. Your efforts, your attention to detail, your friendship, your humor—all superlative.

Rabbi Beraha, you have been a devoted and trusted colleague for eleven years. Your Storefront leadership gives life to a tenet of our Roadmap that urges us to look beyond the walls of Micah. I cherish our friendship.

Rabbi Crawley—I will single you out for a moment. This is also your final Micah Annual meeting. Let's all say thank you to you now—let's all be sure to come on June 13 when we will honor and thank you for the wisdom and care you have showered on us for seven years. That is all I can say now—do come in two weeks.

We have an embarrassment of riches in the talent of our staff in this community.

(I will take a huge risk here and mention one more name—Beth Werlin. You are simply remarkable. The Micah community—or simply the entire Micah staff could sing Hallel every morning simply because you are here to guide everything.)

I have said this before. It has always been an honor to be able to say that I am the rabbi or the senior rabbi of Temple Micah. We truly have a name in the larger Jewish world—KETER SHEM TOV. Thank you to all of you for that.

Louise—thank you for simply everything.

With today, I am officially in my final month.

From the time I began contemplating my retirement, I knew that I wanted to leave the congregation in a great and strong place. We have a talented and dedicated staff and a wise, strong lay leadership that understands the congregation and what we call Micah culture.

I like to say and continue to believe that Micah's best days are in front of us.

I want to add my welcome to Rabbi Tuling and wish you a great Micah adventure. It is a wonderful place.

A Final word—

We are a Washington, DC congregation— I think about the significance of this not infrequently.

The presidential regime that took over in January impacted us in ways large and small.

This year as Federal workers and contractors were losing their jobs we sought to offer a gathering space for support to those who felt the brunt of the devastating attack of this authoritarian regime on the Federal work force and Federal contract workers. This effort will undoubtedly continue.

More than a few times in recent months I have turned to the prophet Isaiah (1:21). In speaking of his own capital city Jerusalem Isaiah cried:

“Alas, she has become a harlot, The faithful city that was filled with justice, Where righteousness dwelt—but now murderers. “

This is now our city.

I was recently quoted in a report on future directions of rabbinical education as having said: “I love thinking about life through the panorama of the Jewish experience in history.” This election put that love into an accelerated overdrive. October 7 and the Gaza War had already set the overdrive into motion as I along with all of you both worried about Israel, the deeper meaning of Zionism as well as the very real dangers of messianic thinking and the marriage of religion and power. When it comes to Israel, how can we not worry.

And now, when it comes to America, how can we not worry.

Now this way of thinking –about our own lives and the times we endure thru the prism of the Jewish experience in history has become an almost obsessive and constant preoccupation.

The Judaism to which we give voice and make manifest in the world right now will mark how we and our Jewish commitments are judged in the future by history. I have no doubt about that.

As American Jews, did we plead for the immigrant, the poor, the minority, any of those who looked for our voice to speak for them and for our shoulder to help carry them?

As lovers of Israel did we demand an ethical Zionism rooted in the vision of the prophets of Israel and as called for by Israel's own founding generations and was emblazoned in Israel's Declaration of Independence?

Remember—as America is under assault from within, our Micah community is needed now as never before, both as a haven for all of us and a strong moral voice in the world.

Thank you for everything.