

North Suburban Synagogue

Beth El

בית כנסת בית אל



It's our Jewish Community
Welcome!





Rabbi Vernon Kurtz



Rabbi Michael Schwab



Hazzan Ben Tisser

Meet Our Clergy

Our beloved clergy are available to our congregants to meet all of their spiritual and religious needs. We provide continuous pastoral support to ensure that we are available for celebrations, for counseling, and in challenging times. Our clergy are committed to local, national and international activities, maintaining leadership positions in a variety of prominent organizations, as well as their respective clergy organizations.

A Message from Our Clergy

B'ruchim Haba'im and welcome to North Suburban Synagogue Beth El. We are a very special place.

We are a warm, welcoming, multi-generational congregation. We are a community of learners and of teachers who engage in deep and meaningful conversation. We offer dynamic and engaging programming throughout the year for members, their children, and grandchildren. From our Scholars-In-Residence and our robust award-winning adult education program to our award-winning youth groups, from our major concerts and artistic programs, book club, and museum exhibitions, to our social action program and award-winning auxiliary organizations, there is truly something for everyone at Beth El.

We offer a full B'nai Mitzvah training program, including personalized private lessons that meet the needs of all types of learners and support opportunities for family participation. Our three congregational schools provide the best in Jewish education and serve hundreds of students. Many students also attend the local Solomon Schechter Day School and the nationally-recognized Rochelle Zell Jewish High School.

Jewish music plays a meaningful role at Beth El with a congregational choir, children's choir, synagogue band, and concerts throughout the year.

At Beth El, we seek to involve our children in every aspect of synagogue life. We take pride in creating a child-friendly atmosphere so that our youngest members feel welcome.

This is your synagogue, your spiritual home. Members help to shape this vision and maintain our tradition of partnership between staff and lay leaders through participation on our Board of Directors and our many synagogue committees. A number of our members also hold leadership positions in organizations such as the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, MERCAZ, Solomon Schechter Day School, Rochelle Zell Jewish High School, Women's League for Conservative Judaism International Board, Women's League Central Great Lakes Region Board, and both local and national positions with Camp Ramah.

Since its founding as the first Conservative Congregation on Chicago's North Shore in 1948, NSS Beth El has established itself as a leader in the Conservative Movement, in the American Jewish community, and in Jewish and humanitarian causes worldwide.

We look forward to meeting and welcoming you to our community!

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A young boy in a blue kippah and suit is reading from a scroll in a synagogue setting. The background features a large, colorful stained-glass window with a sun and a menorah, and a decorative metal screen with intricate patterns. A brass chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

A Place to Pray

At North Suburban Synagogue Beth El, we support a minyan each morning and evening, every day of the year. Shabbat and all Jewish holidays, both major and minor, are celebrated in meaningful ways that encourage participation by all of our congregants.

Daily Services

Religious Services provide a supportive community for saying Kaddish, for observing a Yahrzeit, for connecting spiritually and for those who wish to fulfill the mitzvah of daily prayer. A light breakfast follows the morning minyan. To enhance Jewish learning and build our Jewish community, we also offer a weekly study session, which is open to the entire congregation.

Inspiring High Holiday Services

High Holiday Services are beautifully conducted under the spiritual direction of our Rabbis, Hazzan, and Professional Choir. Services are held at both the Synagogue with the Hazzan and Choir and Highland Park High School with the Hazzan. Youth services for children three years old through 7th grade, as well as babysitting for children three years old and younger are available.

Sharing Shabbat

Kabbalat Shabbat services are held every Friday evening at 6:15p.m., ushering in Shabbat with ruach (great spirit) and community. Several times during the year, NSS Beth El sponsors a family-focused Friday night service such as “Jeans and Jammies,” with dinner and events for children. During the summer, we take advantage of our beautiful backyard and surrounding lake view as families enjoy “Kabbalat Shabbat on the Lake” that includes a pre-Shabbat program and services.

Every Shabbat morning, our congregation comes together for Shabbat services. Worship at Beth El offers members an opportunity to share in the special occasions of their fellow congregants, including B’nai Mitzvah celebrations, Aufrufs, and Baby Namings. Throughout the year, services are enhanced by Torah study groups, Teen Minyans, and visiting scholars as well as Sisterhood, Men’s Club, and Youth Community Shabbatot. At Beth El we also take pride in our Summer Services (mid-June thru mid-August) which are entirely lay-led, offering our members the opportunity to fully participate in the davening, as well as deliver a d’var Torah.

Each Shabbat afternoon (times vary), we gather together for Mincha, Se’udah Shlishit (the traditional third meal of Shabbat), zemirot (traditional Shabbat singing), a brief study session and Ma’ariv/Havdalah – one of the most beautiful times at Beth El.

We invite you to experience a Shabbat morning service at Beth El and make a connection with our warm community.

Young Family Service

Professionally-led services for families with children in 1st grade and younger.

Junior Congregation

Professionally-led services for children in 2nd–6th grades offer opportunities for children to become knowledgeable, whether leading or participating in the service. Parents are welcome to attend.

Beit Hamidrash Minyan

Held several times throughout the year, this congregant-led service is for all ages and offers a more intimate, participatory Shabbat service held in our smaller chapel.

Hey and Vav Family Services

Staff-led teaching services for 5th and 6th grade religious school students and their families over the course of several Shabbatot help students prepare for their B’nai Mitzvah celebrations.



A Place to Learn

NSS Beth El is committed to engaging our congregation in a lifetime of learning. Inspirational, educational, and creative programming engage all our members from preschool to adult.

Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Pre-School

Our educators provide children who range in age from 15 months through 5 years of age and their families with opportunities to learn by engaging them in meaningful integrated Jewish and secular education. We offer an exciting, stimulating, inspiring, and nurturing environment where children can thrive and flourish to reach their full potential as individuals.

Small and Tall

Designed for infants through 15 months, our youngest children, accompanied by an adult, enjoy music and movement in a fun, nurturing environment. Adults have a chance to meet and grow new friendships as well.

Summer Camp – from June to August

We offer a warm and exciting experience for all our children from 6 weeks through 4 years old. Using our beautiful outdoor nature settings, we provide water play, sports, games, and fun all summer long.

Jack and Mildred Cohen Religious School

Through a recently revamped program offering flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of our 21st century Jewish families, the Cohen Religious School is committed to offering a high-quality Conservative Jewish Education. The goal of our educational program is to nurture the Jewish child spiritually, intellectually, and artistically, while deepening an understanding of how to live a Jewish life. The school offers a comprehensive curriculum for students from pre-K through seventh grade, blending learning with practice. In partnership with our families, we strive to strengthen students' faith in G-d, the study of Torah and the Hebrew language, and their connection to the State of Israel.

Miriam and Benjamin H. Sokol Hebrew High School (SHHS)

An all-inclusive program for students in grades 8-12, SHHS provides a dynamic, interactive Jewish education that furthers our students' learning and understanding beyond B'nai Mitzvah. Our intellectually-challenging and sophisticated program includes traditional and modern Jewish studies as well as Hebrew language. We encourage SHHS students to enhance their education by participating in a teen travel program to Israel.

Ba'al Korei Institute for Torah Readers

This dynamic organization was created to enable congregants and their children to learn to chant Torah and to participate regularly in services at NSS Beth El. The Institute helps students learn Torah cantillation by sponsoring classes, offering mentoring, as well as presenting awards and recognition along their pathway of learning. Over 100 congregants are active Torah readers.

Youth Community – BEANS

Our award-winning Beth El Youth Community – commonly referred to as “BEANS” (Beth El at North Suburban Synagogue) – offers a range of youth groups for children in kindergarten through 12th grade. Through BEANS, participants have an opportunity to develop a lifelong relationship with Judaism through peer-led activities and programs. Utilizing an integrated format of social programs, creative lounge nights, sporting events, field trips, and conventions, with emphasis on educational and social action initiatives, we also build Jewish leaders for the future. Additionally, BEANS provides an opportunity for students from Solomon Schechter Day School and Rochelle Zell Jewish High School to come together with their public school friends and create their own Jewish community at Beth El.

- M&M Club – K-1st grade
- Shalom Club – 2nd-5th grade
- Kadima – 6th-8th grade
- USY – 9th-12th grade

Beth El Sisterhood College Connection

This unique program helps us maintain communication with our college students all over the country. We send holiday care packages, coordinate visits, and share opportunities with our college students so they stay connected to our community.

Gertrude Lederman Family Continuing Education Program

Our adult Jewish educational program encourages lifelong Jewish learning through a variety of classes and lectures taught by our clergy and outside educators. Topics range from Jewish Literature and the Arts to Judaic studies, Hebrew, Israel, and current events. We enhance our offerings through partnerships with community organizations and promote learning at all stages of life.

Joseph and Mae Gray Cultural and Learning Center (CLC)

The CLC provides Judaic educational and cultural resources to our community. Our award-winning, up-to-date collection of books, periodicals, videos, DVDs, audio, and other resources, as well as CLC’s supportive creative programming throughout the year, help strengthen and further the vision of Beth El. CLC includes:

The Susan Fisher Glick Memorial Research Center

A technology resource, this research facility provides technological tools for learning, research, and communication. With eight computer workstations, this center strives to keep abreast of developments in Judaic electronic media and to facilitate their accessibility to the congregation.



Maxwell Abbell Library

The Maxwell Abbell Library is a nationally recognized circulating collection of adult fiction and non-fiction, history and literature as well as rabbinic reference books in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish. The Library collection not only supports the academic needs of the student and the scholar, but also provides a broad range of pleasure reading for members.

Pinsof Children’s Reading Room

The Pinsof Children’s Reading Room offers a special collection of materials for children and teens while stimulating interest in Jewish subjects and stories. Activities range from storytelling to elementary research. It also serves as a resource for families and faculty to extend and enhance curricula.

The Rissman Family Kol Ami Collection

This unique collection includes Jewish art, artifacts, and ritual objects to preserve for posterity. The museum also develops programs and exhibitions designed to educate and promote appreciation for Judaic Art and its contributions to our Jewish cultural heritage.

Israel Advocacy Supports Our Beloved Homeland

NSS Beth El is proud to be an integral part of many organizations that support the State of Israel. Members are involved as hands-on volunteers as well as financial supporters of many Jewish organizations.





A Place to Be Together

Sisterhood Brings Women of All Ages Together

Sisterhood is an award-winning, dynamic part of NSS Beth El. Its members are dedicated to strengthening traditional Judaism within the family, community, and Israel by networking to engage, enrich, and empower Conservative Jewish Women. They are members of Women's League for Conservative Judaism (WL), the largest synagogue-based women's organization in the world and are proud to have members serve on WL's Regional and International Boards. Sisterhood provides an opportunity for women to learn, to enhance Jewish observance in their homes, to participate in social action programs, to be a part of our Jewish community and make a difference.

Men's Club Reaches Out with a Variety of Programs

Beth El's award-winning Men's Club features programs to enrich the heart, the brain, the body, and the quality of Jewish life in the home and community. Men's Club offers a full calendar of activities throughout the year for Jewish men of all ages. From the Caveman Dinner to Scotch Tasting to softball and golf to Men's Club Shabbat and Sunday Bagel Breakfast with great current topic speakers, there is something for everyone!

Havurah Creates Connections

Beth El's Havurot offer an easier chance to meet with other members who share interests and values at their current stage of life. Programs range from social, educational, and religious to develop closer, richer, personal ties with other members of our wonderful synagogue community.

Social Action Takes Initiatives to Better the World

The goal of the Social Action Committee is to create opportunities for families and individuals to work together to perform meaningful mitzvot. The Social Action Committee's provides a year-long calendar of activities for families and adults, including annual Thanksgiving Baskets, Coat Drive, Mitzvah Day, Food Drive and volunteering at the Uptown Café in Chicago, all to perform Tikkun Olam and help heal the world.

HAZAK Senior Life

Beth El truly values seniors as a vital part of our community and keeps them active and engaged in our activities. Our HAZAK Committee ensures that seniors can attend all synagogue activities by coordinating a volunteer driver program to assist members who are unable to drive. Special activities and regularly scheduled programs are tailored to the interests and enjoyment of our seniors.



Our Mission Statement

We are a Congregation of 1,100 families and individuals who come together to pray, to study, and to create a warm and welcoming community. We seek to preserve and enhance our People's traditions within the context of Conservative Judaism. We aspire to strengthen our Jewish identity to meet the challenges of a changing environment. We endeavor to provide resources to help us relate to G-d, understand the ways of G-d and enrich the Jewish content of our lives. We encourage our members to serve worthwhile causes within our Congregation and the wider Jewish and world communities. We are committed to support Israel. We educated our children so they commit to the cultural, spiritual and ethical values of our People.

Hear what members of our Beth El community have to say:

“We joined Beth El five years ago after moving from the city because we wanted a Conservative Synagogue with a vibrant preschool. We are now involved in working with other young families at Tot Shabbat. We've discovered a great community.”

“We are one of many multi-generational families at Beth El. After we got married, my husband and I knew we wanted to be active in the Synagogue. Over the years, we helped form the Young Couples Group, have both been involved in the Youth Commission and my husband in Men's Club. It's easy to become involved. Beth El was always my home, now it's home for our whole family.”

“We were empty nesters when we moved to Highland Park from out of state. We were attracted to Beth El for its world-class clergy, vibrant adult education programs, and welcoming community. We are both involved in Havurah, Sisterhood, Men's Club and many Beth El Committees. Joining this synagogue was the best decision we ever made.”

“When we moved here, we joined Beth El because we wanted to be a part of a vibrant Jewish community. Membership has meant new friends and an involvement with a community that shared values we could pass on to our children. Our children and grandchildren are now members and active in the leadership of Beth El. It's home!”

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