



# The Historic United Brothers Synagogue

205 High Street  
Bristol, Rhode Island 02809

Religious Leader: Daniel Kertzner  
Musical Director & Organist: Patrick Aiken

### Officers

Ellen Bensusan – President  
Michael Feldman – Immediate Past President  
Rick Bensusan -1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
Sandy Freedman – 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President  
Steve Krohn – Treasurer  
Debra Darkow – Recording Secretary  
Fern Rouleau – Corresponding Secretary

### Trustees

Herb Sackett  
Michael Sheff  
Alex Freedman  
Samantha Scott-Krohn  
Andy Teitz  
Ronnee Wasserman  
Joan Fandel  
Larry Levinson

### Regents

Harriet Priest  
Larry Priest  
Marvin Glickman  
Jim Williams  
Mim Rosenberg  
Joan Glickman  
Joan Sheff  
Barry Schrutt

401-253-3460  
UBS Phone Number

## NEWSLETTER

August 2016  
Av 5776



United Brothers Synagogue is pleased to announce that Daniel Kertzner has been appointed as our new Religious Leader. Daniel, a graduate of Brown University, has been an active member of the Jewish community in Providence. He is a seasoned non-profit executive with skills in organizational behavior and management. Daniel's skills include a background in professional storytelling and leading religious services, including cantorial work. Daniel brings with him a warm and genuine sense of Jewish community and an openness to welcome everyone who walks through our doors. We look forward to having Daniel lead us in prayer, offer us his perspective on contemporary Jewish life and be part of our growing congregation.

### **SAVE THE DATES**

#### **FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICES**

Friday September 2, 2016 7:30pm  
Friday November 4, 2016 7:30 pm  
Friday December 2, 2016 **6:15pm** Latkepalooza  
Friday January 6, 2017 7:30pm Wine and Chocolate Service

### **HIGH HOLIDAY SERVICE SCHEDULE**

#### **Rosh Hashanah**

Sunday October 2, 2016	7:30pm	Erev Rosh Hashanah
Monday October 3, 2016	9:30am	Rosh Hashanah
Tuesday October 4, 2016	9:30am	Rosh Hashanah

#### **Yom Kippur**

Tuesday October 11, 2016	7:30pm	Kol Nidre
Wednesday October 12, 2016	9:30am	Yom Kippur
	Approx. 11:00am	Yizkor
	5:30 pm	Neilah
	Approx. 7:00pm	Break-Fast

## Mahjong – it's not just for women anymore

THURSDAY, JUNE 9 BY SETH CHITWOOD

REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE JEWISH VOICE AND SETH CHITWOOD



About a year ago, mahjong became a new interest in my mother's life. Watching my mother's group play this confusing game, I became intrigued. What is this mahjong? I had to have an answer! It turned out that getting an answer was the easy part, because my mother was eager to practice. Noticing my interest, she dug into her bag for tiles and game cards.

At first, I remember just feeling dumb and being overwhelmed. I even pronounced mahjong wrong. "What is this sorcery?" I kept asking. "I have no idea what is going on!" But, eventually, it clicks, and the more you learn, the more fun it is. Still, I was apprehensive. "Isn't this a ladies' game?" I kept inquiring.

My mother, Faye Zuckerman, plays with a group of six women, and another group I knew of was all women, too. Even on the official national mahjong website, most of the photos feature groups of women. Not that there is anything wrong with this, but I kept wondering, "Was I about to be the first man to be taught this cryptic game?"

A few weeks later, I posted on Facebook, "This is how I spent my Saturday night! Playing mahjong with my mom!" Moments later, I received a comment from Ellen Bensusan: "We play every Tuesday night. You should join us." Bensusan is a former teacher of mine at Barrington High School. We had stayed in contact via Facebook since I graduated in '09. She is the president of the United Brothers Synagogue, in Bristol.

The following Tuesday, as my mom got ready to head off to her mahjong group, I prepared to leave for mine. I had never been to the United Brothers Synagogue. I couldn't even picture where it was located. When I arrived, it looked to me like a hole-in-the-wall house stuck between two bigger buildings. But then my eye was caught by the large illuminated Star of David window – nearly as big as the entire second floor. The building is older. The sanctuary is beautiful, with a balcony in which the Orthodox women used to sit while the men sat in the first-floor pews. I thought this was ironic, as I was about to play a game that I believed was strictly for women.

However, as I sat down to start, a married couple arrived, followed by two men. The next thing I knew, there were at least six men getting ready to play. "I think that is what makes our group so unique," Carol Louison said. Louison has been a member of the temple for almost two decades. She was one of the original members of the mahjong group, along with Ronnee Wasserman.

“We got together one Tuesday night, and they taught us, and we liked it,” Bensusan remembered. “We were going to do it once a month, but we thought that we couldn’t learn fast enough. By the time you get back, you forgot what you learned. So we started doing it every week. And the rest is history.”

The group, which started with six players, had jumped to 16 by the end of the first year. “I think the interesting thing about our group is that we do have men,” Louison said. Bensusan’s husband, Rick, said, “I go for the socialization and seeing friends. The game [also] challenges my brain, which helps keep me active.” Another man, Chris Menton, commented, “Old friends suggested it to be a fun activity. I enjoy the high levels of reflection and activity.”

Social activities are very important for this synagogue, which only holds services once a month. “This way, the community comes together more often. It’s about community and friendship,” Bensusan said. “This temple is about a community of friends that like to get together and do things together. We see each other every week, which is nice.”

I was flabbergasted by the number of men in the room (and so was my mom when I told her later that night). But, at the end of the day, what I like about United Brothers Synagogue’s mahjong group isn’t just the male players, but the strong bond of the congregants. Everyone knows each other – women, men, even entire families – and they clearly enjoy one another’s company.

Since October, when I was invited to play with the group, I’ve tried not to miss a single Tuesday night. They collect a dollar from each player every week to put toward an end-of-the-year mahjong party, and then donate the remaining amount to a charity. Every week, the snack table is full of homemade desserts. Players rotate between tables so they get to play with different people – there are no cliques. And the competition is friendly, it’s all just fun.

So, even though I mispronounced it, I will never regret asking my mother, “What is this mahjong?”

The United Brothers Synagogue is located at 205 High St., in Bristol. The congregation welcomes new members, as well as mahjong players.

**SETH CHITWOOD** is the creative director of the production company Angelwood Pictures ([angelwoodpictures.com](http://angelwoodpictures.com)). He recently won a 2016 LA Web Series Festival for Best Drama Series (“Family Problems”). He is a film studies and theater performance graduate from Rhode Island College.

Check out the Jewish Voice web page with exciting information about Jewish Life in Rhode Island. Their website is: <http://jvhri.org/>

## **PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

So much has happened over the past year!! It’s been a busy time at United Brothers Synagogue as we said goodbye to Rabbi Glatstein and were lucky to find Daniel Kertzner to take the reins as our new Religious Leader. We have begun the process of making needed renovations to our beautiful 100 year old building. As you can imagine, this process, as with all home renovations, is taking more time than any of us wanted, but we are trying to make the wisest use of our hard earned money. So, change is in the air, not only with the approaching end of summer, but with our community and building at United Brothers. We are all excited about this change and hope that you will join us at the next service. We all wish you a very happy and healthy New Year.

GIFTS OF CARING AND SHARING.

“One who donates much charity becomes the richer for it.”

UNITED BROTHERS GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING SUPPORT

MEMORIAL FUND

Alan Hassenfeld in memory of Merrill Hassenfeld  
Sylvia Greene in memory of Howard Greene  
Stanley Bleecker in memory of Shelly Bleecker  
Louis Hafken in memory of Saul Hafken  
Herb Sackett in memory of Morris Sackett and Edna Sonkin  
Bill and Sharon Fermon in memory of Willy Benjamin  
Carol Louison in memory of Charles Silverman  
Leonard and Goldie Cohen in memory of Harry Rosenzweig  
Ronnie Wasserman in memory of Sylvia Goldman  
Bill and Sharon Fermon in memory of Helen Tarle  
Leonard Cohen in memory of Sharon Shapiro

GENERAL FUND

Herb Sackett and Ronnie Wasserman, Chris and Judy Menton, De Feldman, Brad Louison, Jerry Weiner, Louise Perl, Larry and Andrea Levinson, Carol Louison, Harvey and Dorothea Snyder, Bob and Amy Hirsch, Kevin and Joan Fandel, Charles and Helena Cove, Rick and Ellen Bensusan

CONDOLENCES TO

Rita Hurwitz on the recent passing of her brother Matthew Leibowitz

THANK YOU - To the sponsors of our most recent Shabbat Onegs

April-Joan and Kevin Fandel  
May-Steve and Samantha-Scott Krohn  
June-Ellen and Rick Bensusan  
July-Marilyn Zuller  
August – Richard and Joan Abrams

MEMORIAL PLAQUES

Emily and Lewis Gold in memory of Sammy Gold  
Richard and Joan Abrams in memory of Arnold Dessel, father of Joan Abrams

SPECIAL THANKS

I would like to thank the many members of the congregation who were kind enough to send me cards of good wishes with encouragement for my recovery during my recent health problem. Your concern was much appreciated.

Michael Sheff.

