

# Kesher

THE NEWSLETTER



Come as you are. Discover who you are.

January-February 2022 / 5782

## Welcome to Kesher

Connection is the force  
that binds members and  
clergy to Judaism and  
to The Village Temple.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Giving at The Village Temple .....	2-3
Thank You To All Our Donors .....	3
Annual Vodka and Latkes Celebration.....	3
Social Action Committee.....	4
Teens at The Village Temple.....	5
Save the Date.....	6
Meet Our Bar Mitzvah.....	6

## FROM RABBI FERSKO

What a beginning to a new year—5782! We began this season gathered together at City Winery for the High Holidays and we finished this season gathered together for *Chanukah*. And somehow, *Chanukah* this year...felt a lot like *Chanukah*!

**“All the world is a narrow bridge — and the key, the key is not to be afraid.”**

Our pandemic response and proud of all of you. Thank you for your partnership and perseverance through it all.

And yet, as I write this, we seem to be at the beginning of a new coronavirus variant entering our city and all of the uncertainty that comes along with it. For me, I use Jewish teaching as a comfort during trying times. It is said that: “All the world is a narrow bridge—and the key, the key is not to be afraid.” Sometimes, that feels true. All the world can be a narrow bridge. We must approach it with caution and awareness. The world is a fragile place. But, nonetheless, the key is not to be afraid. And that is what we will do. We will approach this next season with great awareness and caution, but also with bravery. Together as a community we will navigate this newest chapter and the next and the next. I, for one, am looking forward to sharing *Shabbat*, *Purim*, and *Passover*, adult learning, theatre outings, *Shabbat* dinners, and much more together—as it should be! Wishing each and every family at our special synagogue a season of good health, togetherness, and God’s blessings.

*Lshalom,*  
Diana  
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# KESHER

## The Newsletter of The Village Temple

Congregation B'nai Israel  
of New York

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*We invite all who wish to join us to enter our doors: Jews by birth, Jews by choice, interfaith families. Inside you will find a community of people who are on a quest to reshape Shabbat and holiday worship, reinvigorate Jewish learning, and renew our commitment to tikkun olam through social action and justice.*



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## GIVING AT THE VILLAGE TEMPLE

The Village Temple Soup Kitchen has been proudly serving free meals to people in need every Saturday since 1987—150 meals a week. The centerpiece is homemade soup, served with sandwiches, salads, fruit, and dessert. In normal times our guests eat inside The VT building. During Covid, however, our volunteers prepare the meals, which are then handed out at the door or delivered to a nearby pick-up location.

VT congregant Mary Uslander is senior vice president at Fiserv, a Fortune 500 company that provides technology and financial services in the payment processing sector. But on Saturdays, she is soup maker-in-chief at The Village Temple. She's been a VT volunteer for 25 years. This past Thanksgiving, the soup kitchen was able to provide holiday meals thanks to a donation in her honor from Wnet (Women's Network in Electronic Transactions), a non-profit that provides networking and mentoring to women in the payments processing industry.

Mary was kind enough to talk to *Kesher* about her work at the soup kitchen and how it connects her to The Village Temple.

### How did you first get involved with The Village Temple soup kitchen?

My husband Dan used to do the deliveries and bread pick-up. We had a car and we would drive to local stores—back in the day, places like Jon Vie and Balducci's. They donated bread and supplies.

Fast forward... The VT soup kitchen needed help making soup. I started volunteering in the kitchen about 25 years ago and have been doing it ever since. Pre-Covid we had a large group and I would do it every four weeks. But we had to close the kitchen at the beginning of the pandemic. When we opened in the fall of 2020, we still couldn't bring people in to eat. We were making lunches and distributing them. We had fewer volunteers. For the last couple of years, I've been coming in every Saturday with Gabby (Gabrielle Machinist), who runs the soup kitchen, and a few others.

### What made your family decide to join The Village Temple?

I'm not Jewish but I feel I have a Jewish soul. My parents are Greek immigrants; I speak Greek. As a child growing up in Newburgh, New York, I went to church. For us, it was religious, cultural, and about family. Dan was already a member of The Village Temple when we started dating. When we got married, we wanted to join a temple. We live in Tribeca and became members.

### What has it felt like to work in the soup kitchen during the pandemic?

More important than ever, it's the need we see in the community that we are serving. We are feeding hungry people. In the early days of Covid, there were volunteers who were walking around Union Square handing out food bags. I feel we are really having an impact on people and they are counting on us. We actually get letters. There's a couple who come every week; she wrote this beautiful letter about how amazing the food is and how much they appreciate it.



Our soup kitchen volunteers, from left to right: Renee Feinberg (in front), Judy Schiff, Gabrielle Machinist, Mary Uslander (center), Carol Frank, and Sanu Jaitley.

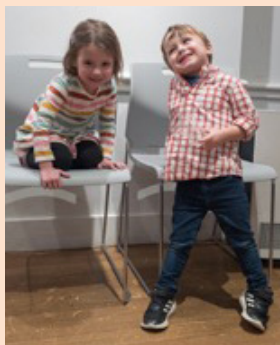
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# THANK YOU TO OUR MOST RECENT VT DONORS

Mimi Abrams  
 Sandy Albert & Bob Gass  
 Fred & Susan Basch  
 Jill & Dean Chavooshian  
 Stephen Cooper & Julie Safer  
 Eileen & Fred Eichler  
 Renee Feinberg  
 Marilyn & John Francescon  
 Joele Frank & Larry Klurfeld  
 Barbara Gerolimos & Alan Brown  
 Rachel Glube & David Friedman  
 Gabrielle Haskell  
 Rabbi Deborah Hirsch & Carole Rivel  
 Liz Horwitz & David Glovin  
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 Marina Levin & Igal Hodorov

David Levit  
 Adam Owett  
 Karen & Jay Palevsky  
 Susan Rosenberg Jones & Joel Roskind  
 Ede Rothaus  
 Arthur Rovine  
 Carole Sadler  
 Julie Salamon & Bill Abrams  
 Judy Schiff  
 Eric Seiler & Darcy Bradbury  
 Sandy & Steve Shore  
 Judy Steinman  
 Nelly Szlachter  
 Ann Temkin & Wayne Hendrickson  
 Jennifer & Ron Weiss  
 Janet & John Winter

## Chanukah at The Village Temple: Our Annual Vodka and Latkes Celebration



## Giving at The Village Temple *continued from page 2*

**Your family has many connections to The Village Temple. Your husband Daniel Uslander was on the board of Trustees; your son Harris became a *Bar Mitzvah* here. Your daughter Genevieve practices *tikkun olam* in her profession, as a clinical social worker. What does the synagogue mean to you on a personal level?**

At the very beginning I got to meet Harriet Zimmer (one of The Village Temple's founding mothers) and a whole generation of the temple Sisterhood. Every Saturday they were my soup testers. I'd

get the nod or, "too much salt" or "too spicy." I still drop off soup to Harriet (who turns 103 in January!) and we have a visit at the window.

For me, my spirituality is the soup kitchen. It speaks volumes about the temple. It's part of The Village Temple DNA. I love the temple because of it.

Keshar *thanks Julie Salamon for interviewing Mary.*

# SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

## What Does Your Preferred Pronoun Say About you?

It's 2022! What does your preferred pronoun say about you? In honor of [International Pronouns Day](#), and as a follow up to Rabbi Fersko's statement regarding our congregation's use of *Elohim*, the Social Action Committee welcomed Dubbs Weinblatt, a non-binary Jewish professional speaker and comedian to The Village Temple.

Assigned a female gender at birth, which endured throughout childhood, Dubbs, "grew up to know themselves as something different." As an adult, Dubbs changed their name, pronouns, and body to fully express the person they knew themselves to be.

Dubbs represents [Keshet](#), a national organization dedicated to the creation of affirming spaces and institutions for Jewish LGBTQ+ youth and their families. In separate meetings with VT teens and adults, Dubbs created welcoming spaces to share and learn about the experiences of Jewish queer youth.

So, what's the deal with pronouns? The [Keshet website](#) explains, "using people's correct pronouns is about *kavod* (respect)... using people's pronouns is about honoring them as a person."

Dubbs suggests:

- **When meeting someone for the first time, DO** share your pronouns first, indicating your openness to hearing others' pronouns. Try it when introducing yourself? For example, you can say, "My name is Rachel, and I use she/her/hers pronouns."
- **If you make a mistake (my kids correct me all the time), DO** apologize quickly. "Statements like, "I'm sorry, but this is just so hard for me," make the conversation about you, as opposed to the person who was (probably unintentionally) hurt, misgendered and/or misunderstood." Instead, you can try, "As he said—sorry, I mean, as *they* said—*latkes* are superior to *hamentashen*, and I agree with them."
- Additionally, like fashion and opinions, a person's choice of pronouns can change over the years. So DO try to accept a person's preferences in the moment.

Overall, Dubbs encourages all of us to be curious and respectful. If you'd like to learn more [LGBTQ+ Terminology](#) or how The Village Temple can be an even more inclusive community, please contact Rabbi Fersko.

## Also in the news...

At the time of this writing, Afghan refugees are temporarily housed in military bases throughout the US. One is close to our home in NYC.

We are proud to announce The Village Temple has made a financial contribution to [Women for Afghan Women](#), to help defray costs facing persons fleeing their home countries. Specifically, our

donation will pay the cost of one Humanitarian Parole fee, allowing one person to enter the U.S temporarily and legally.

If you are interested in helping a refugee family by driving, loading/unloading or donating furniture, please contact Rachel Glube at [gluberb@gmail.com](mailto:gluberb@gmail.com)

## Dayenu Circle—A Jewish Call to Climate Action



The VT Dayenu Circle meets once a month to discuss Climate Action and ways to get involved as a Jewish community. The Village Temple Dayenu Circle participated in the November 13 NY Renew Climate Justice March. Join us at our next action! Reach out to us at [vtdayenucircle@gmail.com](mailto:vtdayenucircle@gmail.com) for more information.



# TEENS AT THE VILLAGE TEMPLE



The current generation of teenagers are more socially aware than any previous generation. Social media and the internet have brought world matters and injustices to their fingertips in real time, and they are passionate about being involved in current issues to help with *Tikkun Olam*, making the world a better place.

Throughout the first semester of this school year, our teens met several times to discuss some of these important topics. Highlights included an interactive program on climate justice and the environment. Speaker Dubbs Weinblatt from *Kesbet* (a national organization dedicated to the creation of affirming spaces & institutions for Jewish LGBTQ+ youth and their families) came to talk to the kids about LGBTQ+ and their experiences as a non-binary Jewish person. Rabbi Fersko led a program about antisemitism, allowing the teens to express their thoughts and feelings about the discrimination faced by Jews.

During the second semester, teens will be continuing to learn about current events and ways they can get involved to help the community. We will be volunteering at The Village Temple soup kitchen, and participating in a bowl-a-thon to raise money for Afghan refugees (stay tuned on how you can help sponsor a teen bowler).

Many of our teens are also involved at The VT as teaching assistants in the Religious School classrooms. It is wonderful that they want to stay and give back to the community that many consider their second home. We look forward to more programs and events in 2022 as we continue to safely gather in-person.

*Liotte Greenbaum*  
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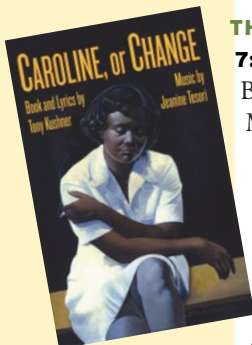


# save the date

## JANUARY

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5:

**6:00-7:00 PM:** Teen Youth Group



### THURSDAY, JANUARY 6:

**7:00 PM:** *Caroline, or Change* on Broadway—Celebrating Black History Month

### MONDAY, JANUARY 10:

**TIME TBD:** Talkback with Roundabout Theatre on *Caroline, or Change*

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12:

**6:00 PM:** 5th/6th Grade *B'nei Mitzvah* Family meeting

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 14:

**6:30 PM:** MLK Jr. Family *Shabbat* Service featuring the Children's Choir

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19:

**6:00-7:00 PM:** Teen Youth Group

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19:

**6:00-7:00 PM:** Adult Education class with Rabbi Fersko

### FRIDAY, JANUARY 21:

**7:30 PM:** *Shabbat* Dinner at Villanelle—15 E 12th St., New York

### TUESDAY, JANUARY 25:

**5:45 PM:** Family *Challah* Bake

### THURSDAY, JANUARY 27:

**6:30 PM:** International Holocaust Remembrance Day presentation by Emily and Melissa Hacker

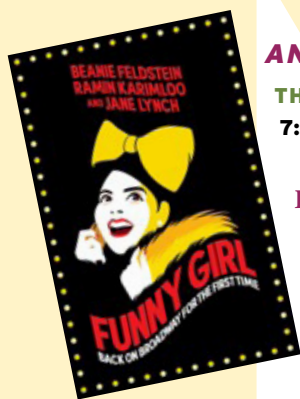


## FEBRUARY

### WEDNESDAYS, FEBRUARY 2 AND 9:

**6:00 PM:** Adult Education class with Rabbi Fersko

Jewish Disability Awareness Month program information to come



## AND IN APRIL...

### THURSDAY, APRIL 28:

**7:00 PM:** *Funny Girl* on Broadway—Ticket info coming soon.

For more information on any of these events, please contact Sandy Albert, [salbert@villagetemple.org](mailto:salbert@villagetemple.org) or call (212) 674-2340.

## Meet our Bar Mitzvah:

January 22: Isaac Alter – Parshat Yitro

