

THE ALPENA NEWS

Temple Beth-El reflects on Rabbi Howard Morrison's teachings during visit

Submitted by Temple Beth-El

Temple Beth-El in Alpena welcomed Rabbi Howard Morrison, as well as friends and neighbors from various churches, on March 16 and 17. During Saturday worship services, Rabbi Morrison discussed the origins of Jewish prayer from examples in the Bible and the progression to the contemporary prayer-book. In addition to Jewish worshippers, members of the Christian community, including its clergy, attended and observed.

The Rev. Paul Lance of First Congregational United Church of Christ said the Saturday worship united us all.

"To be included in the Sabbath service felt as if we were in the presence of God being mediated through an ancient tradition by faithful people whose new prayer-book and lively commentary from the rabbi made it relevant for today's society," Lance said. *"Praying for personal and interpersonal wholeness and then praying for global and universal concerns was like breathing in and out, with the Spirit of God infusing it all."*

On Sunday afternoon, Rabbi Morrison discussed Jewish tradition with the catechism class from Grace Lutheran Church and St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Rabbi Morrison discussed the various Jewish objects and symbols in the Sanctuary, including the shofar (ram's horn used on the Jewish New Year), tefillin (phylacteries), the Torah, and the Ark, which houses the Torah. Some of the other clergy within the Northeast Michigan community also visited our Sanctuary and met with Rabbi Morrison.

Father Art Duchnowicz of St. Casimir in Posen and St. Dominic in Metz remarked: *"For me, personally, I enjoyed meeting Rabbi Morrison, the Jewish community of Alpena, and the other clergy. I learned a lot about Jewish customs and traditions, and enjoyed seeing the sanctuary, particularly the Ark and the Torah scrolls."*

Both Rabbi Morrison and Pastor Tom Orth of Grace Lutheran Church are interested in the concepts that unite both Jews and Christians, as a platform for common discourse. Pastor Orth appreciated the Rabbi's analogy that *"Judaism serves the first floor of the house, and Christianity serves the second."*

Pastor Orth added: *"We focus on celebrating the things we have in common"* with our Jewish neighbors.

Lastly, the Jewish community of Temple Beth-El celebrated Purim with an engaging discussion led by Rabbi Morrison about the themes, plot, and contemporary understanding of the holiday.

The Rev. Ginny Titus summarized the overarching feeling of the afternoon when she said that *"visiting Rabbi Howard Morrison shared the joyful Jewish holiday of Purim through songs and teachings that commemorate the biblical book of Jewish heroine, Esther. It is always a gift to be able to spend time with other Christian denominations and our Alpena Jewish friends."*

The Rev. Will Rayment focused on the aspects of Judaism that overlap with Christianity: *"I enjoyed hearing the Rabbi talk about Jewish traditions. It was a reminder to me of how much Christianity is grounded in its Jewish roots and is still closely intertwined with Judaism in faith and outlook."*

Janice Boboltz also reflected on the Oneness of God uniting us all, regardless of our particular religious affiliation: *"The Oneness of G-d's presence in our lives was so apparent in my participation in the program at Temple Beth El. Our amazing G-d provides us with so many ways to receive and share his love and forgiveness by appealing to our unique differences."*

Temple Beth-El's Guest Rabbi program is sponsored in part by the generosity of the Ravitz Foundation as well as donations by members and friends.