

BHBE Pride Month 2023 Debrief Summary Meetings on July 6 and 10, 2023 Plus other conversations

Comments from: Rabbi Nate Crane, Jay Goldstein, Marc Matlin, Randi Feder, Joel Feinstein, Laura Stone, Louis Freeman, Rabbi Rene Dickman, Marcie Eskin, Michael Kahn, Jessica Littman, Shoshanna Reynolds, Susan Kay, Harriet Robbins-Ost.

OVERALL IMPRESSION:

BHBE Pride Month was largely well-received successfully delivering a message, based in Jewish values, of inclusion, community and allyship through observance of a Pride Shabbat with a relevant D'var Torah delivered by the rabbi, additional appropriate prayers, a message from a member of the congregation, thematic cantorial songs and prayer, and theme-related signage and decorations in Spak and the Rotunda; through month-long publicity, and educational handouts; with opportunities to express allyship by marching in the Chicago Pride Parade and making signs to carry there; through a display of LGBTQ+ books; and solicitation of donations for future LGBTQ+ programming and enhancing the BHBE library collection of appropriate LGBTQ+ books; and with the sale of rainbow challah packaged with Pride-related prayers, flags, and more. (An inventory of all of the materials leftover from Pride weekend was made and the document saved by Michael Kahn for the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee. There are 3 boxes and 2 posters in the BHBE basement.)

BHBE should continue to celebrate Pride Month with programming, preferably spread out over the month of June, instead of focusing on one weekend. To get more children and youth involved, we need better coordination with the Academy and moving Pride Shabbat to earlier in June.

It was generally concluded that educational programming for both youth and adults is warranted throughout the year. **A meeting following the High Holy Days in 2023 should be set to evaluate and decide on the most viable ideas. (See Discussion of Need for and Interest in Future LGBTQ+-related Programming on Page 6.)**

Debrief of Elements of Pride Month/Weekend

Publicity-Promotion

Publicity vehicles were: bimah announcements, flyers outside the sanctuary and the week before the event, put on kiddush tables in Spak; BHBE Weekly newsletter; Shabbat handout; some email blasts; some BHBE Facebook announcements, some personal email correspondence.

What went well:

- It was helpful and effective to use the BHBE Pride Logo on all publicity -- easily recognizable.
- The publicity was staged well . We had a lot of publicity.
- using the what's app for Tot Shabbat moms was a great way to community about the challah sales.
- Trifold – it was helpful at the end to tell BHBE's story.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Links (or QR codes) needed for fundraising to the LGBTQ+ line item and registrations need to be created and put into flyers earlier. This was done well for the challah sale.
- Timing of publicity:

- Some publicity vehicles, like the poster, should have been put out a few weeks earlier to be useful. Links for fundraising except challah were out late.
- If we coordinate with Keshet again for the Chicago Pride parade, we can get all other publicity out earlier and just advertise the Chicago Pride March date until Keshet has all their information.
- Need more personal outreach which is the MOST effective – a coordinated effort of committee members reaching out to 4-5 of their synagogue friends (not duplicate contacting people); use of What’s App networks;
- Expand publicity beyond BHBE, especially for challah sale – Challah sale has the potential of being a great fundraiser.
 - Use informal networks;
 - Include photos of the challahs to entice prospective buyers.
 - JUF would be a good place to advertise – could we expand to JUF print media?
 - Executive Director’s meeting; post on Facebook; send personal email to friends with a link to order challah;
 - Could we align with Schechter?
- BHBE needs someone to coordinate publicity – volunteer, if not staff. There are too many different people needed for the different modes of publicity.
- We need to do a better job of publicizing to the Academy. What about BJBE? How about flyers in backpacks for BJBE and Academy kids?
- We should have Pride month programming and earmark the month in the Sisterhood calendar (Jessica to add “Pride Month” to our calendar, even without specific programming at this time.)

We had a lot of publicity – how did it affect turnout? There were 45 people at Shabbat at the Beach, but only one family with children. Why? Turnout at Pride Shabbat was about the same as usual. Many young families were away. We had a smaller turnout at the Pride March, but a number of people got ill that day.

Rainbow Challah Sale

Challahs from North Shore Bakery were sold for \$8 either for a *Take and Bake* that had 6 different colored dough balls and instructions for baking or a ready-made 4-color challah. Each challah bag included a Prayer for an Ally; the prayer that was read on Pride Shabbat in the synagogue; small Pride flags, bracelets, necklaces, stickers and tatoos, mini bubble makers.

- *What went well:*
- Everyone thought this was successful and that with more publicity and personal outreach by committee members we could have sold many more challahs. We sold to 65 people – selling 75 *Take and Bake* and 55 ready-made challahs. See suggestions above on publicity.
- The sorting and distribution of the challahs went smoothly.
- People appreciated that they got more than just the challah and some commented that the prayer helped set the tone for the weekend.

Suggestions for improvement:

- We should charge more per challah and raise more funds.
- Sell to our Jewish and non-Jewish friends asking them to support our Jewish community! (see publicity suggestions under Publicity and Promotion)

- Challah bag contents – some families wished there had been enough of each thing, like Pride flags, so each of their children had the same things. Should we ask how many children are in a family to fix this issue? Or, how can we address this?

Fundraising

- The challahs were sold at about \$3 above cost and the order form allowed for people to make additional donations which a number of people did.
- As of this date we raised \$2467.00 and our expenses were \$1106.59, leaving a balance for future programming at this time of \$1361.00.
- The committee was asked to consider a gift of \$54 each and several of them made that donation. Publicity – both personal emails and in the weekly newsletter asked congregants to also consider a \$54 gift to help cover the cost of kiddush, decorations, and programming. We had two \$300 donations from committee members used for kiddush. The cost of the Pride March from Keshet including t-shirts and registrations was \$351.06 which was split between two families, so no cost to BHBE.
- Rabbi Crane was willing to use his discretionary fund to make a significant gift to help defray the cost of the Pride Parade and March, but as it turned out, it wasn't needed this year.

Suggestion for Improvement:

We'd be more effective if the asks for donations were made to individuals and in publicity *sooner* using a link to the LGBTQ+ line-item fund.

Pride Shabbat

- Adult Service: Rabbi Crane's D'var Torah (Korach) had an inspiring Pride theme; an additional prayer was added to the service that focused on allyship which the entire congregation read in unison; Susan Kay, LGBTQ+ Chair made brief remarks from the bimah about how Jewish values undergird the values of Pride; LGBTQ+ Inclusion members had honors or read Torah and came up to the bimah for Motzi with a rainbow challah; Cantor Roytman sang L'dor v'Dor to the melody of Over the Rainbow and he sang that song as well. He also read a Pride-related poem.
- Tot Shabbat: Gail Schnitzer Eisenberg read an age-related story to the children, they had rainbow challah and related craft activities;
- Jr. Congregation: Rabbi Dickman led this. They had rainbow challah, read *The Man That Made the Rainbow Flag* and they talked about the use of pronouns.

Kiddush: Menu – pizza bagels; tuna salad; herring; crackers; colorful green salad with peppers; fruit; colored cupcakes. Cost – approximately \$1,200 - \$1,300. We planned for 100.

Spak Decorations: rainbow tablecloths for food tables draped in black cloths; black tablecloths with different rainbow-colored runners on each table; Each table had a Pride flag and a rainbow-colored pinwheel in a vase; and another type of Pride flag in a flag stand; Acrylic stands with "Seven Jewish Values of Inclusion" from Keshet on each table along with some colored beads. Room divider was decorated with rainbow-colored streamers, Pride Parade t-shirt; photos from past Pride Marches, ++.

Sanctuary: There were 2 different, small Pride flags on both the Rabbi's and the Cantor's pulpits on small stands.

Rotunda: Library display and bibliography of LGBTQ+ books; table of relevant educational handouts and the BHBE LGBTQ+ Inclusion history trifold; poster of the Seven Jewish Values of Inclusion; Round table decorated with colorful materials.

What went well:

Comments: There were mostly positive comments from the committee about the Pride Shabbat.

- “the most integrated themed service we’ve ever had at BHBE – with rabbinical and cantorial involvement; options for LGBTQ+ committee members to have honors; additions to the service in terms of prayer and song were outstanding. It was better coordinated and better received than many other Shabbat services.”
- “very impressed with the lack of negative responses.”
- “upbeat and positive”
- “it was good NOT to have speeches at the Kiddush” - we didn’t hit people over the head with the message. Kiddush was a time to eat and socialize.
- From Rabbi Crane: “It was a successful, meaningful and uplifting celebration of community and allyship. I look forward to doing it again.”
- From Rabbi Dickman: “the weekend was amazing and the joy was clear.”
- Decorations were great.

Suggestions for improvement:

- There is an interest in coordinating more with the Academy which is possible with more advanced planning and coordination. This year, with the change in leadership and without prior planning, it was difficult. We could do a better job with publicity with Academy students/parents.
- There were a few congregants who were not positive about the weekend, but it was not at all widespread.
- There was consensus that we should have Pride Shabbat **earlier** in June (some wanted it to be in May before the Academy is over) closer to the end of the Academy year before kids are gone. Need to avoid Memorial Day weekend (5/24/24-5/27/24) AND Shavuot (Tu, 6/11/24). This also avoids conflicting with Pride programming during Chicago Pride Parade weekend and also so many BHBE activities in one weekend. June is hard to have as Pride month because there are fewer youth around.
- Staggering activities throughout June many be better.

Pride Parade

We joined about 14 other organizations under the leadership of Keshet to march in the Chicago Pride Parade. T-shirts were ordered by Keshet. Synagogues split the cost of registration, posters – one per organization that had the organization’s name plus others with quotes, and t-shirts depending upon the number who participated from the respective organization. Our total cost was \$351.06. Fewer than 20 BHBE members marched. Most BHBE members met at the Skokie Swift at 10:15 am and rode down together.

What went well:

Rabbi Crane: “there is something so very special about walking in the parade and being cheered on by so many – it’s unique.”

Mixed feelings about:

- T-shirts – some felt the shirts were bland and like the ones BHBE made in prior years; others really liked them. There weren’t enough shirts made with sleeves and not that many wanted sleeveless; some people didn’t get the size they ordered; however, the generous donations covered costs.

- Banner and signage – some felt the Keshet banner was too small and the signs with organization names were too small if the person carrying it didn't hold it up high;
- There were a lot of young people marching and not that many of the people we've marched with in the past; The fact that we were a Jewish group – which was important to committee members – wasn't that easy to tell, some thought.
- Publicity – since we don't get information from Keshet until late, we could mention the parade, but advertise for it separately from the rest of BHBE Pride publicity;
- Getting to the Parade: Mixed feelings about whether getting to the parade downtown was a deterrent to participation. Some thought it was easy and we don't have to walk far from the train. We had the smallest number participate this year; however, a number of people cancelled at the last minute due to illness.

Suggestions for improvement:

Buffalo Grove Parade – We discussed advantages/disadvantages of marching in the Buffalo Grove Parade next year to try it out. People had mixed feelings about this, but most agreed it was worth a try to see how it is. We could focus on that parade but also advertise the Chicago Parade for those that prefer the excitement and magnitude of Chicago. BG does not compare to the great and empowering feeling of the Chicago parade.

Possible advantages to Buffalo Grove: easier to get to; easier for youth and elders because it's much shorter; synagogues have their own banners and t-shirts, so more recognizable; family-friendly; we'll probably gain people if we do that; Some people might feel more connected because they know people there; for kids under 10, Chicago's 4 miles is a lot to walk.

Shabbat at the Beach

Congregants could come 30 minutes early to Shabbat at the Beach to make posters to carry in the Pride Parade. We had poster materials and suggestions for what to put on the signs. We had rainbow challah for kiddush. Rabbi Crane mentioned it was Pride Weekend and invited people to come to Pride Shabbat and/or march in the Parade. There was no other specific Pride programming. 45 congregants attended, but only one family brought their children.

What went well:

- It was a lovely, uplifting service and, while smaller than past Shabbats at the Beach, it didn't seem small. People enjoyed dinner together.
- Poster-making was a great idea
- Pride content: mentioning the weekend, having the rainbow challah and poster-making is probably enough

Suggestions for improvement:

- There needs to be personal outreach to get people to attend.
- Have it earlier in June so kids may still be available.

Discussion of Need for and Interest in Future LGBTQ+-related Programming

There is agreement that programming beyond Pride Month is warranted and important. There should be a normalcy to addressing LGBTQ+ issues and having programming. **LGBTQ+ Inclusion is a VALUE of BHBE, NOT a committee.** The ideas below are not prioritized.

- We should frame and hang, perhaps in the Rotunda, the Seven Jewish Values of Inclusion – Use LGBTQ+ funds.
- BHBE Pride Shabbat/Month did not have an educational component. This could be done some time during the month or during the year, but *not* on Pride Shabbat.
- Outreach to Other Jewish Organizations for Collaboration: consider expanding beyond our own BHBE community for some programming. JUF, Keshet, other synagogues on the North Shore, outreach to the Jewish gay community on the North Shore. This could be for elements of BHBE Pride Month as well as other initiatives.

Programming Topics: (Have educational training – perhaps we host and invite other synagogues to participate. What are other synagogues doing?)

- We haven't had Keshet training for several years. It's time to have it again. Perhaps for the Board.
- address the growing dangers in this country for LGBTQ+ individuals and others. Approach the issue that this country has a long way to go – “we have not arrived.”
- LGBTQ+ advocacy – need clergy support to address this.
- BHBE can become a member of Keshet's THRIVE program which has membership from many Jewish organizations throughout the US to help show support for trans people.
- An evening where people come together to hear powerful personal stories/experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals (helps youth not feel alone, if targeting that age)
- a history class on what happened at JTS with the students who pushed LGBTQ+ issues – an example of activism in Conservative Judaism.
- an adult ed class on Judaism and homosexuality – what does it say in the Torah?
- an adult ed Talmud class. BHBE members like intellectual information. Conduct a class on where LGBTQ+ fits in halachically. Could also be a sermon. Text study. Different genders are not new.
- Programming for Men's Club and Sisterhood
- Men's Club Breakfast program

Youth-Related Ideas

- Programming for LGBTQ+ youth and young adults to provide a venue to meet that could reinforce that people are not alone. Afford them a place to have meaningful conversations. Could we collaborate with JUF? Keshet? CHUSY has programs for youth that explore LGBTQ+ identities and issues with conversations. Per Rabbi Crane we send notices of this out to our BHBE youth.
- Check with Sam Bolen, USY, about youth programming ideas.
- For middle schoolers education – look at the Talmud where there have been different genders
- Have teens from Keshet talk about why Keshet started.
- Have a lesson on “Why do we call it B-Mitzvah now?” Why does it matter?
- bring in educational programming to the Academy and USY aged youth. (possible coordination with Keshet)