

# Beit Simcha ("House of Joy") Newsletter

## Twenty Years of Joy!

It seems hard to believe, but Beit Simcha has actually been in existence 20 years. I remember the first meeting of what would become Beit Simcha. A Bible study/fellowship group met in our home on Falcon Drive for what we thought would be a monthly meeting. Eight people were there, including one-year old Adam. It was actually for Adam's sake that we thought we wanted a regular meeting with other Jewish believers. NO WAY were we starting anything as ambitious as a congregation! We weren't even leading it, but rather facilitating. However, God had different plans.

Our first inkling of this came when Jeff Foreman, then assistant Rabbi at Beth Yeshua, invited us to a Rabbi's conference to be held at Beth Yeshua. Despite the lack of qualifications, we went and met some amazing people, as well as getting challenged to "start a work." Beth Yeshua also helped us to get our fellowship group going by giving us a list of people in our area who had visited Beth Yeshua. I regularly called everyone on this list every month thereafter.

We continued to meet monthly (Fri. night), and then we added a monthly havdalah meeting, bringing us up to twice a month. In the meantime, God was working on Rabbi Glenn, getting him ready to take on more leadership and to "accept the call" to be a Rabbi. (Ask Glenn sometime for the whole megillah!)

We were encouraged when the Shulmans moved onto our street as new believers, and started coming. We started meeting weekly soon after, still on Erev Shabbat. We moved from our home into a room at First Baptist Church in Bethlehem. (It was providential, because that winter saw so much snow that there was only one lane on our street, and no parking.) We found out that Mark Shulman's grandfather had been a cantor, so we asked him to chant the Kol Nidrei on Yom Kippur. He did a great job, so we had ourselves a cantor!

After that the years moved quickly. We acquired some new musicians when the Leshers came in response to an ad in the *Messianic Times*. We moved our service to Shabbat morning to be more family-oriented. We started home groups, We sponsored coffeehouses with Messianic artists. Our average attendance was about 30 at that time. I liked to say that Rabbi Glenn was a full time professor of computer science at Lehigh University, with an all-consuming hobby of being a Messianic Rabbi.

We moved to the lower level of Boulevard ECC church, across from the Jewish Community Center, in the fall of 1997, after extensive prayerwalking. That is particularly memorable to me because it was in time for Sukkot, and Glenn and I brought our new daughter Abigail into the sukkah to be dedicated. We stayed there seven years. They were years of growth personally and congregationally. Rabbi Glenn took a sabbatical in the spring of 1999 to teach in Israel, and by that time we had enough other leadership in the congregation to survive a three month absence by the Rabbi.

By 2004 we had grown enough that we felt it necessary to move again, this time to Wellspring Church on Schantz Rd. in Allentown. This move has been good for us. We have grown to the point that our normal attendance is almost 100, give or take. We have services for all the holidays, as well as weddings and Bar/Bat mitzvahs. Rabbi Glenn retired from Lehigh this past September and is now full time (but still has an all-consuming hobby of literary-editing a new Bible.)

The people who attend and serve are very special. I think of all the people who have come through our doors, some of whom have gone to the wilds of Alaska, Arkansas, and Israel. I remember especially Phyllis Gordon and Alan Kaufman, who are with the Lord.

Shalom and simcha to you all, Pamela Blank



### Join our Celebration!

Calling all Beit Simcha regulars and alumni to a special celebration on January 21, 2012 at Wellspring! Jeffrey D. Miller (of Messianic Minutes) will be speaking at the morning service at 10am. We much appreciate this, because Jeffrey D. was influential in encouraging Rabbi Glenn and introducing him to Tikken and Dr. Dan Juster. He has also served faithfully as an outside elder.

After the service there will be a special oneg. Along with special foods, we will play games, have a slide show and videos, and honor some special guests. Come with your memories and dreams and enrich our celebration!

## Highlights of my 18 years at Beit Simcha.

By Bennett Eisenberg

About 18 years ago my wife saw a flier in a store announcing a Saturday night activity sponsored by Beit Simcha--a Messianic Jewish congregation. These were Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah. It seemed like a contradiction to me, and this puzzling aspect made it more appealing to me. I wanted to see how this could be. Were they really Jewish or merely people who were formerly Jewish? So, we decided to attend.

I was immediately impressed by the people there. It was an assortment of people raised Jewish and people raised non-Jewish, but they all had a love for the Jewish people. This was very moving to me. I had grown up in an era where there was always some kind of separation of Jews and Christians, some kind of barrier that never could be overcome. In the meantime I had married a Christian woman, so we had overcome this barrier. It was good to see that maybe times were changing for the better in Jewish-Christian relations. The event featured an interesting group of musicians performing worship music presumably in the style that King David might have. There followed a Havdalah service for the end of the Shabbat. Although I had been raised Jewish, I had never heard of such a service. It was really moving and beautiful and remains 'til today my favorite type of service.

Unfortunately, the answers to my questions about Messianic Judaism were not answered. But we decided to attend the Shabbat services to learn more. As I recall, they were held on Friday nights and were very peaceful—just right to end the work week. There were two musicians- a guitarist (the Rabbi's wife) and a pianist. They played and sang beautiful Messianic Jewish songs by Marc Chopinsky and others. Some of the service was in Hebrew and people wore yarmulkes and tallits. Jesus or Yeshua was mentioned many times. Still you could follow the services for weeks and not learn the basic reasons for why you could follow Yeshua and still be Jewish.

There was an interesting side development that kept me attending services there. When I was young I had played the accordion. But my accordion was broken when I was in college and I never had it repaired. Also my wife had played the flute in a marching band in college, but later her flute grew rusty and unplayable. Now a few weeks before starting to attend Beit Simcha, we had attended a piano concert where in the middle of the concert the artist unexpectedly took out an accordion and played it. It sounded great and it encouraged me to buy another accordion. We had to go to Philadelphia to get one and while there we also picked up a new flute for my wife. When the Rabbi's wife found out that we were musicians, we were invited to join the worship

team. We played together there for five years until my wife dropped out. I continue to play there until today and had many wonderful experiences doing so. I especially liked playing in front of large and unfamiliar audiences as when we played at large Passover seders sponsored by the congregation, or when we played at other churches, or even the year that we played in an afternoon program of the Messiah conference at Messiah College. Other musicians joined and left us over the years. I was always amazed at the tremendous musical talent present at Beit Simcha. In particular, I would mention Shelley Leshner who played piano and also composed some of the best Messianic music around. The Rabbi also has composed some very good songs. At present we have a superb flautist and keyboard player and some excellent singers.

Back to my quest to understand Messianic Jewish theology, I found that to really understand this I would have to attend the bi-weekly Rabbi's Bible study. This was very impressive. During the weeks I would write down questions that would occur to me about anything in the Bible and bring them to the study. I was impressed that without any pre-knowledge of the questions, the Rabbi could answer my questions in a very logical and persuasive way. It was clear that he knew more about the Bible than most Doctors of Divinity even though he was a Professor of Computer Science and only a part-time Rabbi. I gradually came to understand what Messianic Judaism was all about and it made sense. After about 12 years of being a regular attendee, I decided to join the congregation. Since then I have continued to grow in many directions as I prepare to teach Shabbat school to the children or prepare drashes to present to the congregation about Torah portions of the week or even prepare skits for Purim and Hannukah celebrations. Most recently I have myself been leading a Bible study once a month at our Havurah or small group meeting. We have begun at the start of Genesis and study one chapter a month. In this way I hope to become even more knowledgeable about God's word.



# Memories

By Barbara Sitler

(Editor's note: Barbara has been with us from the beginning, and is a stalwart intercessor, as well as worshipper with voice and flags. She has also hosted numerous meetings in her home, and served as a *shamshah* or servant-leader.)



My favorite memories of Beit Simcha fall into many categories:

Children: I remember little Ian Shulman dressed like his father on the platform at First Baptist on Yom Kippur, baby Abigail under the *sukkah* at Boulevard UCC, young Quinn Levy worshipping with two green flags during a Zemer Levav concert.



Sukkot: I recall gathering branches to decorate the *sukkah* on the Blanks' deck on Falcon Drive, dancing on the lawn at Boulevard UCC across from the Jewish Community Center, singing and looking up at the moon and stars through the lattice of our *sukkah* at Wellspring.

Purim: My favorite Purim skit featured Mark Shulman playing the king who interviewed the "queen" contestants, including Kim Breed who came in on roller skates.

Early Days: We met in the Blank's home when Adam was a small child. I remember Camille wanting to go again to Israel, and Irwin with lifted hands adoring the Lord in Spanish. There I became aware that God had a call on Beit Simcha from the beginning to bring wholeness to people.

Chanukkah: I've enjoyed Bennett Eisenberg's parodies of Christmas carols, and I remember the sweet voices of the children singing about the glow of Chanukkah candles on the snow.

Sisterhood: We had fun times, watching a movie together, meeting for dinner, and having a slumber party at Ranjena's.

Meetings at Rabbi's: I looked forward to hearing what God had spoken to Rabbi during his walk before the havurah meetings. I was blessed by the Justers, the Santoros and many others who visited the congregation. I felt a sense of unity, especially in *shamashim* gatherings.



## **Announcing: Purim, Passover, Israel, and Our New Web Site!**

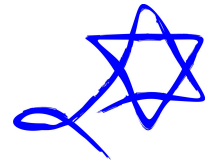
Our *Purim* celebration will be March 11. We also enjoy our *spiel* (skit) and *hamantazchen*. *Pesach* (Passover) begins April 6. Let us know if you'd like to join one of family Seders--or host one yourself. We celebrate *Bikkurim* (Firstfruits ... of the Resurrection) on the evening of April 7.

Alas, we had to cancel our trip to Israel for this coming March, but God willing, we'll do a very similar tour in March 2013. Check out the proposed itinerary on our web site. Please let us know if you might like to join us or if you have any questions.

We have a brand-new web site! Alas, our old podcast service suddenly went kaput! So we quickly constructed a new podcast facility, so you all can listen to the Rabbi's sermons and messages of our other speakers. Go to [www.beitsimcha.org/podcast](http://www.beitsimcha.org/podcast) to give a listen to a few messages we've already installed, subscribe to us on Itunes, and let others know about it! Coming very soon, our web site will feature a web-based store. When it's ready, you'll be able to purchase Beit Simcha polo shirts, coffee mugs, and magnets to help us get the word out, the new *Tree of Life Bible*, maybe some selected Judiaica items, etc. So keep an eye out for [www.beitsimcha.org](http://www.beitsimcha.org)!

Please do stay in touch with us by sending us your contact info, especially your **current email address**.

c/o the Levys  
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### **Prayer Requests from Rabbi Glenn**

- Please pray that we reach our unsaved families, friends and neighbors with the Good News.
- Pray that seekers you know will come to our Shabbat services and Passover Seders and respond to the message of Messiah.
- Pray that we be an effective bridge between the Jewish and Christian communities--with dance workshops, a prayer station near the JCC, and and "Power and Love" healing ministry.
- Pray for our ongoing effort to promote the unity of the body in the Lehigh Valley. The Praise and Prayer Concert in November was awesome and I am helping to plan another one at Calvary Temple on May 20, We are launching new *Becoming One* bible studies in local churches.
- Pray for the Tikkun America conference (June 8-10), for which I serve as conference chair.
- Pray for my ongoing work with many others as the Literary Editor for the *Tree of Life Bible* project. I am currently working on the Old Covenant and a commentary for Psalms with Dr. Jeffrey Seif and Paul Wilbur - due this summer!
- Pray for clear direction as our eldership team considers the possibility of a building project in order to better fulfill our vision: "We are a community welcoming Jews and Gentiles, rejoicing, worshipping the God of Israel, learning, and loving one another."
- Pray about encouraging us and supporting our vision with an offering. *Brachot* (blessings!)

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