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Why The Charlotte Torah Center is Important to Our Community

By Ellen Engelhardt, co-director, CTC

What are the criteria by which you measure the reality of God's existence? What does the Torah have to say about how you should live as a Jew that is relevant to your life in the modern age?

With these questions, I may have lost half my readers. To the rest of you, thanks for sticking with me.

Being bombarded unexpectedly with matters of Torah, it is perfectly understandable why one would move on to other articles of interest. Questions of this kind weigh down the speed in which we are accustomed to thinking and resolving problems, and they burden us with what may appear irrelevant to our day-to-day living, which is challenging enough. Yet, these questions, and others like them, should be asked precisely

because they do matter to our daily lives. Jews choosing to study Torah matter because it sustained our people for thousands of years. Jews choosing not to study Torah matter because it begs the question "What will sustain us now?"

As co-director of the Charlotte Torah Center, I often hear the question, "What goes on at the CTC?" "Isn't it a synagogue?" Here's the answer: The Charlotte Torah Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing Jewish education to all Jews from all walks of life. On Shabbat mornings, Rabbi Oppenheim gives his "72 Minute Learners Service" where the basics of the service structure are explained, where questions are taken from the student "congregants," and the purpose of every prayer, davening gesture, silence and song are considered. I have yet to leave a "72



Minute Learners Service" uninspired, which speaks to the power of knowing why.

If you are interested in learning more, contact Rabbi Oppenheim to set up a time to meet. Or you can also visit the CTC website at charlottetorahcenter.com for more information on programming. It is true, participation in Torah learning is not for the casual observer, but naturally, the rewards are bountiful and lasting. ✪

Faithful Celebrate Temple's 125 Years

By Bethany Fuller, Statesville R&L

Dancing the hora during the middle of a Shabbat service was a little unorthodox, but a couple members of Congregation Emanuel did just that during the temple's 125th anniversary service on June 12.

"It's a celebration," Rabbi Aaron Philmus said while guiding the group around the room.

There was plenty to celebrate as the group recounted the history of Statesville's oldest house of worship. The conservative congregation was originally organized as a Reform group in the home of roots and herb merchant Isaac Wallace in August of 1883.

The congregation celebrated its faith and the longevity of its spiritual union by planting a red dogwood by the front door on North Kelly Street.

"God has been with us for 125 years," Philmus said.

Planting a tree to mark special occasions is a Jewish tradition that is written in many texts, Philmus said. The act represents putting down roots in an area and the dedication to continue to grow.

The temple and its congregation has experienced many highs and lows during its history, including the 34 years from 1920-1954 when it became dormant during the two World Wars and Prohibition.

In the 1950s, a resurgence of Jewish life in Statesville created by the post-war baby boom and the growth of the textile industry brought in new members, who helped revive the congregation.

Philmus told the congregation that when he was in the temple alone sometimes, he could feel the presence of everyone who worshipped there before him.

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