

In Depth Study at the CTC

By Rabbi Chanoch Oppenheim

About two years ago, I was approached by someone with no connection to the CTC who be-moaned the fact that there weren't options in town for advanced textual study of the Tanach, specifically the early prophets of the Hebrew Bible and asked me if I would do it. I said, "I'm game, name the time, place, and book, and I'll be there." This has turned into a class that meets regularly and is one of my favorites because the attendees have a background in Hebrew, and one of them was a Biblical studies major at Hebrew University. As an educator, it's a pleasure to prepare for a class really interested in delving into a text not only for its literary, religious, and historical significance but also for the richness of language. Time after time we find words and phrases that attest to the depth, grandeur, and uniqueness of Hebrew as it's used in the Hebrew Bible. The class grew in an organic way and is a community enrichment resource that

helps to fill the need for in-depth study for anyone (ironically, none of the participants is a CTC member).

One point that students make in class is how many similarities we share with Jews who lived thousands of years ago and how we sometimes fall into the same life traps that lead to personal and communal deterioration. Another concept we encounter is God's endless capacity to forgive and there are many life lessons in being compassionate learned from it. How about things you never would expect in the Bible? A righteous leader who marries a former prostitute; someone who was committed to a life of ritual purity and abstained from wine

who had two unsuccessful marriages to women of ignoble backgrounds.

We don't always agree; I might even say we usually disagree. The rule is that all matters of language, interpretation, religion, and history are topics for our no holds barred discussions.

If you are looking to learn about stories and topics you haven't revisited since childhood, feel free to join us.

Due to some summer scheduling changes, please call for updated meeting details (704-367-1225). ✪



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Moving South in the South Temple Or Olam Now at Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church in University City

Our congregation is an intimate, homey place. But our congregants come, quite literally, from far and wide. Temple Or Olam's geographic span stretches from Statesville to Indian Trail, from Huntersville and Davidson to Harrisburg. This past year, we asked the question: Where, exactly, is our geographic center?

University City, North Charlotte.

Our search for a new home began almost a year ago. We knew we needed to move to the center of the metro east side and we did. We wanted a collaboration that would strengthen us and our partner. We found one. We hoped for a change that would bless everyone and it has.

This summer, Temple Or Olam moved to University City. We will be meeting for services, *chagim*, and social activities at Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church, on 9704 Mallard Creek Rd.

Before we left for University City, we acknowledged the generosity of McGill Baptist Church of Concord, which has been our home for almost a decade. At a recent Sunday service, Temple Or Olam pledged a gift to CVAN, our local center for battered women and their families in honor of the McGill community. Rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede expressed our heartfelt thanks to the congregation for their hospitality and generosity. In turn, Pastor Steve Ayers spoke about the need to know how to love others who are not always like you, who speak or look or act differently, but who need your help and support. Both congregations are thankful for all they learned about each other, for the many shared experiences, and for the fellowship they developed over the years.

TOO's process with Piedmont UU has included a covenantal agreement, conversations about future tikkun olam projects, and shared services to better get to know each other. We've discovered that the two congregations have much in common: A commitment to building sacred and intentional communities, devotion

to creating a safer, fairer, and more peaceful world, creating spiritual opportunities for our membership to grow substantively in their understanding and practice.

The Reverend Robin Tanner and Rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede knew already that they were of like minds – both advocate marriage equality, protecting voter rights, and public schools and caring for those less fortunate. One of Temple Or Olam's social programs involves congregants regularly gleaning local fields to help feed the hungry.

We expect the congregations to collaborate on these and many other fronts in the future – two socially-minded communities will, we are certain, be able to strengthen each other's efforts.

Imagine attending services where children are included with ease, where no prayer is rushed. At TOO we learn why our service is not just one component following the next, but an intentional architecture for reflection, for awareness, for building conscious community.

One of our teenage congregants recently brought a guest to a Kabbalat Shabbat service. Afterwards, her friend said: "I feel happier." The mother of the teenager was standing by. She added: "That's how we all feel after services."

Our services in the wooden-floored, light-filled sanctuary of Piedmont Unitarian Universalist Church are just the beginning of a new and exciting stage in our congregation's life. Thanks to the welcome that congregation has given us, this is a move we announce with joy and pride. Want to join us? Check out or-olam.org. ✪



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