

Martin Luther King Shabbat

Friday, January 16, 7-9 PM

Temple Beth El will kick off the MLK Weekend as we celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King and reflect on the ways in which we need to continue to work together to bring his vision to life for a more just society.

This year's MLK exchange will be with dynamic and passionate preacher and leader Pastor Donnie Garriss of Antioch Missionary Baptist Church in Grier Heights. Pastor Garriss has been leading Antioch since 1997. He is active in the community serving on our CMS Interfaith Advisory council, working on issues of affordable housing, supporting R.A.I.N. (Regional AIDS Interfaith Network), and especially serving the needs of the Grier Heights Community.

Pastor Garriss received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Shaw University, Raleigh, NC in 1988 and a Master of Divinity degree



Pastor Donnie Garriss

from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ in 1991. He was ordained by the Zion Baptist Association of North Carolina in 1985. He is married to Regina L. Mack-Garriss in 1990; and they have one son, Jonathan Christian.

A highlight of our annual MLK service is the music. The Lion of

Judah Church Praise Team under the leadership of Pastor Sharon Richardson, joined by our Temple Beth El adult choir, will lift up our service and prayers. Thirteen Lion of Judah Praise Team dancers will do a candle light dance to "O Guide My Steps."

As part of the MLK annual exchange, Rabbi Judy Schindler will be preaching at Antioch Missionary Baptist on Sunday, January 25th at 10 AM. Both events are open to the community. ✪



A Taste of Judaism ... Are You Curious?

Come join us to learn (or relearn) about core Jewish principles and explore the Jewish perspective on living in today's world. Everyone is welcome, Jewish or not.

Temple Beth El will offer four 90 minute classes, featuring an introduction to: Jewish spirituality, Jewish values, Jewish history, and Jewish traditions. These free classes will be held at the Temple on Wednesday evenings, January 7, 14, 21 and 28 from 7-8:30 PM.

Rabbi Judith Schindler, Rabbi Jonathan Freirich, and Cantor Mary Thomas will lead the classes.

Don't miss this great opportunity to get to know the Temple Beth El clergy and learn the basics of Judaism in a relaxed setting.

Seating is limited and registration is required. To register, please contact Candace Naliboff at 704-749-3068 or cnaliboff@beth-el.com. ✪



TEMPLE BETH EL

The Mystery of the Hanukkah

By Rabbi Dr. Barbara Thiede

Last week, I received a call from our Temple Administrator, Charlotte Miller.

"Did you send me a hanukkah?" she asked.

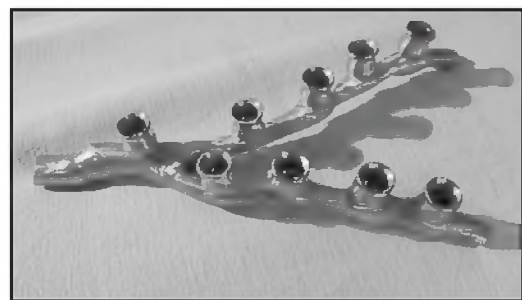
"Nooo," I said. "I have something else in mind."

"Well, someone did."

It had come in the mail, she said, but without a card. She had checked, but there was no explanatory text message or email.

We speculated a while. Someone from the temple who appreciated her incredible devotion to the welfare of the community? A sibling, perhaps? A friend?

She described the hanukkah for me. Charlotte, usually so pragmatic and practical, was clearly delighted. The menorah was solid brass, she said, wonderfully heavy. It was formed in outstretched branching arms to look like tree limbs.



The mystery gift.

"Crowned with light on Hanukkah," I said. "Beautiful."

"Well," Charlotte said, "Someone knows my taste."

She went off on a scouting trip, found the menorah on a website, and sent me a picture. She called again.

"This was not cheap," she said. Still flummoxed, she added, "I think somebody made a booboo. This had to be meant for someone else."

I was not so sure. Expensive gifts usually end at their intended address.

Charlotte has, of course, many wonderful non-Jewish friends who have watched over her over

these past years. It's been a long journey, but she is almost home, now. She has garnered years of congregational experience at Temple Or Olam. She has devoted years of heartfelt learning to her studies. All that, combined with her enthusiasm and devotion have demonstrated to everyone around her that she is ready.

Charlotte will finally own her Jewish name and her Jewish life just about the time this article is published. Her conversion classes will be over. A new stage in her learning and growth as a member of the tribe will begin.

Clearly, someone wanted to show Charlotte that her choices had been fully accepted. Someone wanted to honor her for who she is and for who she is becoming.

Here's what she wrote in her blog:

"A call to the shipper revealed the sender: my children. My oldest son, who is quiet but fiercely conscious of other people and their needs, knew before I did that I would need something for my holiday of Hanukkah while the family's Christmas swirls around me. He found the hanukkah on a website and asked

the other children to join in supporting me. Their celebration of my choice is a true gift: that of their love for me as I am.

"I am truly blessed in the friends, family, and coworkers I have in my life.

"I am fortunate to have my rabbi as my guide through these years of discernment and study. She gifted me with my Jewish name, a perfect fit that I don't think we realized at the time. Gavriela: strength of God.

"May that strength continue to uphold me and Temple Or Olam as I go out into the world as a proud but thoughtful member of the Jewish tribe."



Keyn y'hi ratzon, Gavriela. And may the lights of your hanukkah shine with joy and pride - this and all the Hanukkahs to come. ✪

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