



## *LGBTQ+ Inclusion at BHBE A History*

*BHBE is proud to provide a warm, inviting, nurturing and joyful environment for our LGBTQ+ community -- striving to promote communication, understanding, and acceptance within our own congregation and in the broader Jewish and LGBTQ+ communities.*



*The LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee thanks Rabbi Nate Crane, Cantor Pavel Roytman, Aaron Frankel, former Director of Education & Early Childhood Programming, Executive Director Michael Kahn, Administrative Coordinator, Jackie Ernest and the synagogue staff, the congregation's lay leadership and the BHBE members for their encouragement and ongoing support of the committee's efforts.*



The LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee was founded in 2015 by Rabbi Anne Tucker and three congregants. Today we have 15 committee members, some of whom are members of the LGBTQ+ community or who have LGBTQ+ family members or other loved ones.

We have come a long way in educating ourselves and our congregation on LGBTQ+ issues and in actively welcoming, supporting, and promoting the rights of congregants and those of the larger LGBTQ+ community, regardless of their gender identity.

*Highlights of some of our activities and accomplishments:*

- In 2016, Rabbi Tucker and the Ritual Committee confirmed BHBE clergy would perform *aufrufs*, weddings, and commitment ceremonies for Jewish same-sex couples in which at least one partner of each couple is a member of our synagogue.
- Early efforts included modifying BHBE's paper membership application to make it gender neutral. In 2023, Shulcloud was updated so that online membership information is also gender neutral.
- An all-gender restroom with a sign including symbols for men, women, transgender, and accessible-to-all was designated in the Rotunda.
- Decals were placed around the synagogue stating we are LGBTQ+ -friendly.
- With the generous financial assistance of the Joel and Laurie Feinstein family, BHBE hosted two Keshet educational trainings: one for Academy faculty and BHBE staff and one for Academy parents.
- We added the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee's mission statement to the BHBE website.
- Our rabbis and congregants have spoken from the bimah on LGBTQ+-related topics.
- We participated in a special LGBTQ+ Kabbalat Shabbat service at Temple Sholom with several other congregations.

- In 2016, BHBE sponsored and marched for the first time in the Chicago Pride Parade with a contingent of 30 BHBE members of all ages, carrying our own banner and passing out BHBE-labeled candy to parade spectators who were thrilled to welcome us. That year, we sponsored one of the portable restrooms along the parade route! Thereafter through 2019, BHBE members marched in Chicago's Pride Parade along with other synagogues and Jewish community organizations.
- A BHBE budget line item was created for specific donations to the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee.
- In 2019 BHBE was accepted as a participant in the Keshet for LGBTQ Equality in Jewish Life's Chicagoland Leadership Project along with a diverse group of approximately 20 other Jewish organizations. The initial planning conference was held at BHBE on December 2, 2019. Four members of BHBE's LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee attended as BHBE representatives. The goal of the project was to help each organizational team prioritize concrete steps toward LGBTQ inclusion over the year to come. BHBE created an Action Plan, building on existing inclusion measures as well as starting new ones. BHBE's plan included additional leadership training and action steps for educational programming, organizational culture, and organizational policy.
- BHBE has been part of a coalition of LGBTQ+ and ally communities to develop and present LGBTQ+ events for the Jewish community in Chicagoland, including the Chicagoland Pride Parade. During Covid, BHBE organized, co-sponsored and participated in a Zoom Virtual Pride Havdalah program with the organizing Chicagoland congregations and affiliates. The program included Havdalah services, engaging discussions, and music.
- The Committee partnered with and donated to the BHBE library to provide Jewish LGBTQ+ books and other materials for adults and children.
- BHBE is holding its first-ever Pride Weekend on Friday, June 23 through Sunday, June 25, 2023, which includes Shabbat morning services with an LGBTQ+ d'var Torah and prayers and displays in the Rotunda during Kiddush.
- We're getting ready to march on June 25, 2023, in Chicago's 54th Pride Parade!
- In honor of BHBE Pride Month 2023, BHBE now proudly is listed in Keshet's *Equality Directory*, a resource for individuals to find synagogues, rabbis, and other Jewish organizations and clergy committed to inclusion and equality for LGBTQ+ Jews and their loved ones.
- We are grateful to BHBE's Sisterhood and many congregants for donating funds for LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee effort.



***The members of the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee (past and present):***

Diane Cotton Caplan	Susan Kay, Chair
Rabbi Nate Crane, Senior Rabbi	Marc Matlin
Rabbi Rene Dickman, Annette W. and Mel F. Seidenberg	Shoshanna Reynolds
Director of Youth and Family	Harriet Robbins-Ost
Randi Feder	Ellen Rodin
Joel Feinstein	Melissa Schiffman
Laurie Feinstein	Laura Stone
Aaron Frankel, Chief Strategy Officer, Congregation Rodfei	Karen Thirman
Zedek	Rabbi Annie Tucker, Senior Rabbi, Temple
Louis Freeman	Israel Center, White Plains, NY
Jay Goldstein	Max Weiner

***For further information:***

LGBTQ+ Inclusion Committee  
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