

MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION CONFERENCE

caring for ourselves and our communities



SUNDAY
Oct. 11, 2026



9 A.M. — 4 P.M.



BETH EL SYNAGOGUE
5225 Barry St W, St Louis Park



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Norman Ornstein

"Turning Grief into Action"

WELCOME



Welcome to a warm, inspiring day of learning that has been intentionally co-created by and for our community. In this shared experience today, we will explore our theme, **"Caring for Ourselves and Our Communities"**. Designed for people of all backgrounds – whether you are navigating your own mental health journey, supporting a loved one, or working on the front lines as a practitioner – this event bridges the gap between resources and lived experience.

Our goal is to **dismantle stigma** by focusing on the human elements of mental health. As we hold the gravity of today's challenges, we choose to lead with collective compassion. We operate in the "Both/And," recognizing that we can be both struggling and hopeful, both seeking help and providing it.

Together, we will cultivate new wisdom and emphasize the ways our communities can come together to create lasting **understanding, healing, and positive change.**



This conference is presented by Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minnesota (JFCS), as we strive to improve mental health access, understanding, and education in the community. Generous support from community donors and partners ensures that the conference is **accessible and open to everyone.**

ADDITIONAL INFO

- When you register for the Conference, you will receive a confirmation email. Prior to the Conference, you will receive a reminder email with additional information.
- The in-person and virtual Resource Fair offers you the opportunity to connect with representatives and/or browse websites and contact agencies that can best suit your needs.
- You can access books and information from the Hennepin County Library at the Conference. Also, look for a recommended mental health book list on the Conference homepage to read about topics that are of interest to you.

SCHEDULE



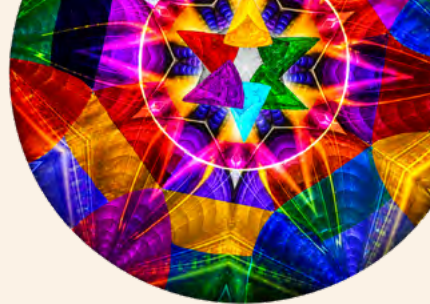
9 a.m.	Registration, Resource Fair, Teen Art Exhibit and Crafting Experience
10:15 a.m.	Opening Welcome Address Shir Harmony Performance Rabbi Davis, <i>Beth El Synagogue</i> Lucy Marshall, <i>JFCS Director of Engagement & Education</i>
10:40 a.m.	Keynote Session - Norm Ornstein
11:15 a.m.	Community Drumming Circle
11:35 a.m.	Breakout Session One: #1-7
12:45 p.m.	Lunch and Resource Fair
1:50 p.m.	Breakout Session Two: #8-14
2:50 p.m.	Mind/Body Movement
3:10 p.m.	Closing Session

- A check-in room is available for those who may need to take a short pause from complex conversations.
- Transition times allow you to get to the next scheduled opportunity, but also to meet self-care needs of stretching, eating, and staying hydrated. Please bring a water bottle with you.
- Look for hallway activities to nourish yourselves in between sessions
- Certificates of Attendance can be found on the Conference homepage within five days following the conference.
- Individuals in need of ASL accommodation should contact Tabitha at TDeRango@jfcsmn.org by Sept. 24

KEYNOTE



"Turning Grief into Action"



Norman Ornstein



Our keynote speaker, Norman Ornstein, is a retired scholar from the American Enterprise Institute and co-host of the podcast "Words Matter."

Ornstein is vice president of the Matthew Harris Ornstein Memorial Foundation, named in memory of his son, Matthew, who died accidentally on Jan. 3, 2015, after a 10-year struggle with serious mental illness.

Ornstein was elected as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2004. He was named one of the top 100 global thinkers in 2012 by Foreign Policy Magazine and one of the 250 most influential people in Washington in 2021 by Washingtonian Magazine. Norm will share his inspiring story of turning grief into action for change.

COMMUNITY DRUMMING CIRCLE



Qadash Yasharahla

Using rhythm as a tool for learning, personal growth, wellbeing, and community building.



BREAKOUT SESSION ONE

SESSIONS 1-7



1

JOURNEY INTO A MENTAL ILLNESS

Presented by Mindy Greiling

Through this mother's journey with her son, we will learn about prodromal signs of mental illness, what to do, common difficulties, components of success and self-care, and the importance of advocacy.



Mindy Greiling co-hosts a popular podcast, "Schizophrenia: Three Moms in the Trenches," and authored "Fix What You Can: Schizophrenia and a Lawmaker's Fight for Her Son." Greiling served in the Minnesota House of Representatives for 20 years, where she initiated the first state bi-partisan mental health caucus after her son, Jim, was diagnosed with schizophrenia. She served on the state and national NAMI boards, the Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance and Board, and was president of NAMI Ramsey County.

2

NAVIGATING SENSITIVE CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN

Presented by Erin Spencer, MSSA, LICSW

Many of us are navigating tricky and sensitive conversations across generations. Together, we will discuss strategies to foster connection, embrace discomfort in difficult conversations, stay curious, and remember that you don't have to be an expert to open the door to meaningful dialogue.



Erin Spencer, MSSA, LICSW graduated from St. Olaf College with a bachelor's in social work in 2014 and from Case Western Reserve University with a master's in social work in 2015. Erin works with myHealth, formerly West Suburban Teen Clinic, and has served adolescents ages 12-26 in the west metro for over 50 years. She has worked as a therapist for children, teens, and families with an emphasis on child welfare throughout her career. She primarily uses techniques from cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing with a trauma-focused lens. Erin works to create a safe and welcoming space for all clients, including those with neurodivergence and LGBTQIA+ clients.

3

RE-ENVISIONING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH: A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, AND CHANGE

Presented Jeffry Wark, MA, LICSW

Men's mental health is shaped by many factors, including self-care, identity, culture, life experiences, relationships, and community expectations. As these influences continue to evolve, mental health providers, community leaders, and advocates are exploring new ways to engage men, build trust, reduce barriers to support, and promote resilience and overall well-being. This interactive community conversation will explore current trends in men's mental health, discuss what is and is not working for men from a wide range of backgrounds, and examine opportunities to strengthen support systems where men feel encouraged to seek help, develop resilience, and thrive.



Jeffry Wark, MA, LICSW, is the founder and clinical director of the Center for Integrated Well-Being in Roseville. He brings over 34 years of experience as an integrative psychotherapist, clinical supervisor, and educator, working with individuals, couples, families, and professional communities. His clinical approach integrates mind, body, emotional, and meaning-oriented dimensions of care. He also facilitates men's groups and retreats, with a current emphasis on supporting males in developing practical, sustainable well-being across life domains. Jeffry's work with men focuses on strengthening presence, accountability, and relational integrity, while fostering authentic connection, purpose, and ongoing development.



4

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING WELL-BEING & RELATIONSHIPS DURING POLITICALLY DIVISIVE TIMES

Presented Leah Persky, Ph.D.

Political anxiety has become an increasingly common experience that can affect individual well-being, family dynamics, relationships, and community interactions. This session explores the challenges associated with navigating politically divisive times and provides practical strategies for managing political anxiety, creating healthy boundaries, and engaging in difficult conversations more effectively. Through a focus on stress management, boundary setting, communication, and conflict resolution, attendees will leave with practical takeaways to help foster well-being, support others, and navigate politically challenging situations with greater confidence and effectiveness.



Leah Persky is a trainer, educator, and coach for families and individuals. She holds a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and an M.A. in international studies, with a specialization in conflict resolution and human rights, from the University of Denver. Her work focuses on gender and health, supporting families through coaching, and examining the impacts of political anxiety and divisiveness on individuals and families. A certified coach for youth and families, Leah's professional experience includes more than a decade as a teaching faculty member in higher education, as well as roles as a non-profit program manager, certified family life educator, coach, trainer, and yoga teacher.

5

TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER: HOW TRAUMA-INFORMED COMMUNITIES CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR HEALING

Presented by Dr. Ryan C. Van Wyk

Trauma shapes not only individual lives, but also the relationships, organizations, and communities we share. At the same time, healing is rarely an individual's endeavor—it emerges in environments that foster safety, trust, connection, and belonging. Grounded in trauma-informed principles and an understanding of the nervous system, this session offers a practical framework for recognizing the effects of trauma, understanding how nervous systems influence our capacity to care for ourselves and one another, and creating psychologically safer environments that can interrupt cycles of adversity while supporting resilience, healing, and human flourishing.



Dr. Ryan C. Van Wyk is a licensed psychologist specializing in trauma-informed care and leadership. With over 20 years of experience serving in military, health care, and substance-use treatment settings, he helps individuals and organizations navigate the complexities of healing and resilience. His current professional work includes training in trauma-informed care, consulting with individual therapy providers and treatment organizations, and leadership and organizational development. His work centers on the belief that resilience grows when care is practiced not only within individuals, but across relationships, teams, and the systems we inhabit.



6

APPLYING DBT SKILLS IN REAL-LIFE SITUATIONS

Presented by Julie Morin, M.A., LPCC (she/her)

This interactive session provides participants with practical strategies for using dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills to effectively manage intense emotions, distress, and challenging situations. The session will focus on the TIPP skill (Temperature, Intense Exercise, Paced Breathing, and Progressive Muscle Relaxation), a crisis-survival technique designed to help individuals quickly reduce emotional arousal and regain emotional balance. Participants will explore the purpose and components of the TIPP skill, learn when and how to apply each strategy, and engage in guided activities to practice implementation in real world scenarios. Through discussion and case examples, attendees will strengthen their ability to recognize moments when TIPP can be helpful and develop confidence in teaching, coaching, and using the skill themselves.



Julie Morin, M.A., LPCC (she/her), earned her M.A. in clinical psychology at Argosy University-Twin Cities. She completed her master's internship at Mental Health Systems, PC, where she completed formal DBT training and conducted group skills training, individual DBT, and diagnostic assessments. She has 13 years of experience utilizing DBT in different IOP settings with both adolescents and adults. She has experience working with complex trauma and dissociative abilities and is a certified practitioner in the application of the anchored relational (formerly AIR Network) model of therapy. Julie is also trained in level 1 and level 2 EMDR and trained in basic accelerated resolution therapy (ART).

7 EXPANDING THE HEALING TOOLBOX: COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES TO MENTAL HEALTH

Presented by Tara Burns, LPCC; Rebecca Bullen; Rebekah Camacho, BSN, MS, OTR/L; Kayla Roper, OTR/L; Kathy Flaminio, LGSW, MSW, E-RYT 200; Chrissy Mignogna

Traditional talk therapy is an effective and valuable approach for many people. At the same time, some individuals find that incorporating complementary, holistic practices can further support their overall well-being. This session explores creative, accessible, evidence-informed approaches that can be used alongside conventional care. Participants will gain practical ideas for integrating these practices into everyday life to promote resilience, reduce stress, and enhance emotional wellness. This powerful panel will dive into the effectiveness of nature, art, mind/body movement, and role-playing games as sources of healing.



Tara Burns is a licensed professional clinical counselor (LPCC) at JFCS of Minnesota, who works with adults across the lifespan, with a special focus on supporting older adults and caregivers. Many people come to her during times of change, whether navigating grief, caregiving, health shifts, midlife reflection, new beginnings, or when they're simply feeling overwhelmed, disconnected, or stuck. She also works with couples who want to strengthen their connection and communicate more openly. As a certified Forest Therapy Guide, Tara offers walk-and-talk sessions outdoors when it feels supportive, inviting nature to be a steady, calming presence in the work.



Rebecca Bullen is the principal of Perpich Arts High School, Minnesota's state-funded public arts high school, and artist. She has dedicated her career to arts education, believing that creativity is essential to learning, connection, and well-being. Throughout her work as an educator, artist, and leader, Rebecca has championed the power of storytelling and creative expression to help young people find their voice, build community, and navigate life's challenges. She serves on the board of directors for Arts Schools Network and is a frequent presenter on arts education, leadership, and student belonging.



Rebekah Camacho, BSN, MS, OTR/L, is a clinical services leader with 15 years of experience in health care, whose work centers on expanding evidence-informed, occupation-based interventions within behavioral health systems. She currently serves as the lead occupational therapist at PrairieCare, where she designed and implemented the organization's first occupational therapy service line across eight sites and 14 programs serving youth and adults. As a certified Therapeutic Game Master through Geek Therapeutics, she applies principles of activity analysis, therapeutic grading, and group process facilitation to operationalize gameplay into measurable clinical outcomes.



Kayla Roper, OTR/L, is a licensed occupational therapist specializing in adult mental health within partial hospitalization (PHP) and intensive outpatient (IOP) settings at PrairieCare. She has led the development of adult OT programming at her site, designing occupation-based group interventions that support executive functioning, emotional regulation, and functional independence. Kayla is passionate about helping adults reconnect with meaningful roles and daily routines during periods of mental health destabilization. Her work integrates evidence-informed practice with creative, engagement-driven approaches that foster collaboration, skill development, and sustainable recovery.



Kathy Flaminio, LGSW, MSW, E-RYT 200, is the founder and CEO of movemindfully® and the creator of its training, workshops, products, and curricula focused on trauma-responsive mind-body practices. Kathy's work supports educators, mental health professionals, youth workers, and families in cultivating self-regulation, focus, and overall well-being through accessible mind-body practices. Her mission is to support public mental health by creating practical, inclusive, and compassionate pathways for healing through the mind-body connection.



Chrissy Mignogna is the author and creator of the I Am Safe book and framework. She has developed programs and curriculum with movemindfully for 17 years, teaching sessions in crisis mental health hospital units, outpatient programs, juvenile services, special education, and Head Start settings. Chrissy also offers community-based classes both in-person and online through her own business, Winged Heart Yoga. Her mission has always been to promote mental health by creating welcoming, safe, and inclusive spaces for people to explore the mind-body connection for healing.

BREAKOUT SESSION TWO SESSIONS 8-14



8 ASK A RABBI: JEWISH PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH

Presented by Rabbi Tamar Magill-Grimm; Rabbi Sharon Stiefel (RRC '90); Rabbi Jason Rodich; Rabbi Emma Kippley-Ogman; Julie Dean, Moderator

Explore the themes of mental health and community well-being through the lens of Jewish values and teachings. Be inspired by rabbis from across the Twin Cities who will share their unique perspectives on Jewish wisdom and our current community needs around mental health.



Rabbi Tamar Magill-Grimm brings a love for ongoing, serious, deep Jewish learning and spiritual growth to her role as senior rabbi at Beth Jacob Congregation. Over the course of the last 10 years, she has served in various roles at Beth Jacob, including rabbi-educator and assistant rabbi. Prior to working at Beth Jacob, she was the rabbi at Congregation Beth Israel in Rock Island, Ill. Rabbi Tamar received her rabbinic ordination and master's in Jewish studies from Hebrew College Rabbinical School in Boston in 2010 and graduated from Brandeis University in 2001 with a B.A. in anthropology and sociology, and a certificate in women's studies.



Rabbi Sharon Stiefel (RRC '90) is rabbi of Mayim Rabim, the only Reconstructionist congregation in the Twin Cities. She recently was also the part-time pastoral care rabbi at Shir Tikvah in Minneapolis. She has devoted her career to helping individuals and communities at moments of transition. She is a licensed graduate social worker with a master's in social work from the University of Pennsylvania. As both a rabbi and a licensed social worker, she encourages people to create space for meaningful Jewish connection.



Rabbi Jason Rodich is an associate rabbi at Temple Israel of Minneapolis. He has served congregations in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. Rabbi Rodich received rabbinic ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles in 2014 and holds a bachelor of arts in cultural studies & poetry from the New School for Social Research in New York.



Rabbi Emma Kippley-Ogman – as a Jewish and interfaith chaplain, Emma supports the Jewish community at Macalester in co-creating vibrant Jewish cultural, religious and spiritual life on campus, joins with other chaplains in cultivating multi-faith engagement, and offers pastoral care to all members of the college community. She is ordained by the pluralistic Rabbinical School of Hebrew College and has a B.A. in history of science from Harvard College.



Julie Dean, Moderator – Julie is the executive director and founder of Living Mussar. With a background in education, facilitation, and Jewish spiritual leadership, Julie brings decades of experience supporting individuals and communities as they grow through meaningful learning and practice. She is passionate about returning the language, wisdom, and practice of Mussar—inner work for a better world—to the heart of Jewish life. Julie's dedication is fueled by her first-hand experience witnessing how Mussar transforms not only how we live our values, but also how we deepen our connections with ourselves, with others, and with Judaism.

9 HOPE AND HEALING: SUICIDE PREVENTION THROUGH DBT'S "LIFE WORTH LIVING" FRAMEWORK

Presented by Hannah Baker, MSW, LGSW (she/her)

Join us for an enlightening presentation that explores dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) as a proven, effective approach to suicide prevention. This session will break down the fundamental ideas behind DBT, explaining how it helps individuals build crucial skills to better understand and manage their emotions and life's difficulties. We'll explore DBT's key skill areas: mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotion regulation, and interpersonal effectiveness, and discuss how these practical tools are applied to reduce thoughts of suicide and harmful behaviors. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how DBT empowers people to develop stronger coping strategies, increase their emotional resilience, and ultimately create a meaningful and fulfilling life worth living.



Hannah Baker, MSW, LGSW (she/her), is a psychotherapist with DBT-PTSD Specialists of Minnesota, specializing in trauma-informed care and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). Since beginning a career in human services in 2016, she has developed a diverse background across home-based services, rehabilitative mental health care, and community mental health case management. Her work focuses on supporting individuals and families navigating suicidality, with an emphasis on practical, evidence-based DBT skills that promote safety, emotional regulation, and resilience.



10 EMBRACING PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

Presented by Chandler Holman and Jode Freyholtz-London

This interactive session will introduce attendees to the role and impact of peer support within mental health services. We will provide an overview from certified peer support specialists (CPSS), as well as discuss the value of lived experience and how peers assist in supporting others to find purpose on their life journey. You will be part of facilitated small group activities designed to help participants better understand peer support principles in practice.

**The session will focus specifically on mental health peer support rather than substance use recovery peer services, while briefly acknowledging the broader peer support field.*



Chandler Holman is a certified peer support and recovery specialist with experience spanning the arts, behavioral health, hospice care, and disability support systems. She serves on multiple committees supporting behavioral health initiatives and policy. She works to build systems with people rather than for them, centered on collaboration and improving access to care.

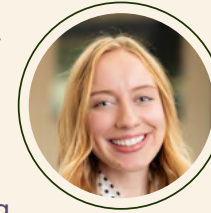


Jode Freyholtz-London is the founder and executive director of Wellness in the Woods, a mental health consumer-run non-profit serving rural Minnesota. Her mission is to help individuals identify their strengths and support systems to achieve and maintain the lifestyle they choose, supporting people "where they are at" with unconditional respect. Jode is a certified peer specialist and mental health first aid instructor; she holds leadership training from the Institute for Executive Director Leadership, Education Central Lakes College.

11 SHOWING UP FOR ONE ANOTHER: COMMUNITY, MENTAL HEALTH, AND COLLECTIVE HEALING

Presented by Calista (Cali) Wery (she/they)

Communities have the power to shape how people recover from difficult times. This presentation examines the impact of collective experiences on community mental health and explores how trauma-informed awareness can strengthen our responses. Participants will gain insights into recognizing the challenges of poor community well-being and trauma, reducing the risk of re-traumatization, and creating environments where people feel seen, supported, and empowered to heal together and advocate for solutions.



Calista (Cali) Wery (she/they) is the family peer education coordinator for NAMI Minnesota. She develops and delivers educational programming, events, and support for families and professionals working with children and youth with behavioral and mental health concerns. Her educational background is focused on sociology and youth Studies. Cali brings lived experience of navigating life with co-occurring mental health conditions as well as experience working with youth and families impacted by mental illnesses. These experiences have given Cali a deeper understanding of the importance of accessible mental health resources and support.



12 FEELING LESS ALONE IN THE 'SANDWICH GENERATION'

Presented by Robyn Frank and Eliesa Johnson

We will cover the wide range of pain points that people are experiencing while sandwiched between multiple generations who need our care and attention. This session offers a safe place to share stories and resources. Together, we will emphasize the importance of finding your village, asking for help, and cultivating community. From finances to legal support to navigating caretaking with your siblings and beyond, we will explore all the varied elements of living in the "Sandwich Generation."



Robyn Frank and Eliesa Johnson are co-hosts, moms, daughters, business owners, emotional-support-humans, legal proxies, and full-time amateurs in the messy middle of life. We're part of the so-called Sandwich Generation—that uniquely chaotic stage of adulthood where you're raising young kids while simultaneously caring for aging parents. We decided to create The Sandwich Generation podcast. It's a place to process all of this out loud—with some humor, some honesty, and, most importantly, some HELP.

13

HARNESSING YOUR PERSONAL AGENCY

Presented by Angela Cowan, MSW, LICSW (she/her) and Nikole Pitman, MS, LPCC

This interactive discussion will explore how the concept of community can serve as a protective and powerful buffer against isolation. We'll discuss collective trauma and its impact on individuals and communities, and will highlight the protective roles of connection, resilience, and personal agency. Whether experienced directly or through the constant stream of media, collective experiences can contribute to feelings of powerlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, and disconnection. Through reflection and small group discussion, we will learn how reconnecting with personal values can help you feel a restored sense of purpose and empowerment.



Angela Cowan, MSW, LICSW (she/her) is a licensed independent clinical social worker and is the counseling program manager at JFCS of Minnesota. Angela believes each person is the expert in their own life, and she views her role as therapist as one who collaborates with and supports clients on their own journey. She works with adults who are experiencing severe and persistent mental illness, anxiety, depression, life transitions and grief/loss.



Nikole Pitman, MS, LPCC is a licensed professional clinical counselor with JFCS of Minnesota, where she provides outpatient psychotherapy to adolescents and adults. She has experience working with individuals navigating trauma, psychosis, mood disorders, anxiety, personality disorders, and other complex mental health concerns, using evidence-based approaches including EMDR, CBT, DBT, ACT, and Internal Family Systems-informed interventions.



14

STEPPING INTO GRATITUDE: SMALL PRACTICES, MEANINGFUL CHANGE

Presented by Merri Guggisberg

In a world that often pulls our attention toward what is missing, gratitude invites us to pause and notice what is present. More than simply saying "thank you," gratitude is a practice that can support emotional well-being, strengthen relationships, build resilience, and help us navigate life's challenges with greater perspective and hope. In this interactive workshop, participants will explore the research behind gratitude and experience a variety of gratitude practices through reflection, conversation, and hands-on activities. Whether you are supporting others professionally, caring for loved ones, or looking to nurture your own well-being, you will leave with practical tools and resources that can be used right away.



Merri Guggisberg is a certified parenting coach, speaker, and founder of MKG Parent Coach. For more than 25 years, she has supported parents, caregivers, and families through parent education, coaching, and community engagement. Grounded in the practices of mindfulness, kindness, and gratitude, Merri helps individuals strengthen relationships, build resilience, and navigate life's challenges with greater intention and connection. She is the creator of the PAUSE Process, a practical framework that equips parents and caregivers with tools to respond thoughtfully and create more connected family relationships.

CLOSING



"Why our stories matter"

Every one of us carries stories that shape how we see ourselves, how we connect with others, and how we make meaning of our lives. This reflective closing session explores the power of storytelling. Together, we'll reflect on how the stories we share, hold on to, and those we choose to hear, have the power to transform both ourselves and our communities.



Robyn Awend is a community builder, artist, storyteller, and director of arts engagement at the Minnesota JCC. She creates opportunities for people to connect through creativity, conversation, and shared experiences. She believes that sharing our stories is one of the most powerful ways to explore identity, deepen understanding, and build empathy. Robyn has presented Stories from the Tribe, Listen to Your Mother, and other live storytelling events, where she uses humor, vulnerability, and lived experience to invite reflection and inspire authentic connection.

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GUERRILLA
HAIKU
MOVEMENT



PERPICH





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OCT. 11, 2026



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BETH EL SYNAGOGUE

*We hope to
see you there!*



Register today!

\$36 or pay
what you can.



**All are
welcome!**

