

The Maggid Aug 2026

Congregation Etz Chaim

P O Box 3752
Merced CA 95344



Notes from Student Rabbi Joy Plummer

Shalom, Chaverim! Shalom, friends!

My name is Joy Plummer, and I'm going to be serving you as your student rabbi for the coming year. I'm excited and nervous all at once, and maybe some of you feel that, too. I know we'll learn a lot from each other. It'll be an incredibly valuable experience for me with a steep learning curve, and I hope it'll be an enjoyable process for you as well! You have a lot more experience working with a student rabbi than I have of being one!

I grew up in the small Jewish community of Fresno, where my family affiliated with the only Reform congregation. Because my mother and step-father were far from their families of origin, they participated in forming a chavurah, a friendship circle, for celebrating Jewish holidays together. This chavurah was the foundation of my Jewish life. It was there that I experienced the most wonderful Passover seders, for which I participated in making matzah from scratch from wheat grown by one of our members.

Also foundational to my Jewish childhood was that my mother became the cantorial soloist at our synagogue, including during the time of my bat mitzvah. I was raised with a lot of music and joy in my Jewish life, a source of identity and pride. I chose to continue going to religious school past my bat mitzvah, and to be involved in Jewish life through the local chapter of the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY).

After graduating high school, I lived as a foreign exchange student in France. I came back to Fresno fluent in French, but without much direction. I ended up moving to the Bay Area by myself, with a job as a manager of a record store. I went to the company's managers' conference, and met my future husband. Working in a record store wasn't going to be my career path, so when Eric and I moved to San Francisco, I went back to school. We ended up moving back to Fresno so that Eric could go to graduate school and I could finish my bachelor's in Philosophy.

At the same time, we affiliated with my childhood synagogue, and were married by Rabbi Robert Seigel, of blessed memory. I was also taking all of the religion courses offered by the philosophy department at Fresno State, and became immersed in religious thought. I began going to Torah study, to Shabbat morning services at the local conservative congregation, and sometimes to Friday night services at the local Chabad. I had also gotten involved in the local Hadassah chapter, who sent me to Israel for the first time. As I was getting ready to finish my degree, I figured out that I wanted to go to rabbinical school; however, at that time, in 2002, no rabbinical school in the country would admit a candidate who was in a committed relationship to a non-Jew.

In 2003, Eric got a job in Fremont Unified School District, and so we headed back to the Bay Area. I worked at the Jewish Community Federation and Jewish Family and Children's Services doing development. When our kids were born, I quit working outside the home, and focused on my other passion – cooking and baking bread. I worked as a personal chef and caterer, and also worked at restaurants and bakeries while my kids were at school. I was an accomplished food expert, and got to sell my bread at a local farmers' market, a job that was like Disneyland for me. Eventually, I returned to work in the Jewish community, working in programming and community engagement at a large Bay Area congregation.

And then HUC-JIR, the Reform seminary, reversed their interfaith relationship policy and a couple of months later, announced their Virtual Pathways program, so I would not need to relocate my family in order to fulfill my still-deep desire to serve the Jewish community in the most meaningful way.

Eric and I have been together now for almost 34 years. Music continues to be the core of our lives together. We have three fabulous children, all of whom are musical. Our oldest daughter, Andy, is about to go off to college (eek!) to study child development and psychology, and our twins, Henry and Ruby, are entering their sophomore year of high school.

I had considered graduate school a number of times, but no path had ever been as compelling as the rabbinate. So here I am. I have so much gratitude to you all for entrusting me to learn how to be a spiritual guide, and I know we will learn together through triumphs and challenges. I'm looking forward to the year ahead, to getting to know Congregation Etz Chaim and the Merced Jewish community, and together exploring Torah and bringing a greater sense of shalom – wholeness – to this community and to our world.

President's Message from Rich Kleitman

During the long hot summers here in the Valley, our congregation takes a break from our regular schedule of services (1st and 3rd Fridays) - but we have stayed active. In this article, I will review and preview some of our summer and fall activities.

Our group relaxed in July with an ice cream-and-movie social, as well as conducting our 3rd Friday lay-led service. Both the social and service were well attended and very successful.

Our Board also met and planned out a calendar of events for the upcoming year with our new student Rabbi. This issue of the Maggid includes a preview of the proposed activities, as well as a chance to sign up to host the Rabbi for meals and/ or to bring desserts to share after Shabbat Services.

August begins with another fun event on the first of the month—a swim party at the Salzberg/Kirihara home. Then, we will have a hiatus from activities before we welcome our new student Rabbi, Joy Plummer. Her first visit will be the weekend of August 27–29. This will be a great opportunity to get to know her and welcome her to our community before the High Holidays in September. This issue of the Maggid also includes a flyer of the High Holiday events.

It has been several years since we had the opportunity to pray and celebrate with a student Rabbi. From past experience, I can tell you that it has been a joy (no pun intended) to learn from each of the incredible people who came to Merced to share their knowledge and love for Judaism with us. This is a great chance for us to expand our horizons and to grow together.

B'Shalom,
Rich Kleitman

**Monthly 6:30 Potluck and 7:30 Lay Led Kabbalat Shabbat Services
at our Chavurah House on Parsons Ave
will resume in October**

Student Rabbi Joy's Scheduled Weekend Visits

Hosting the Rabbi for dinner is a treat;
Hosting the Oneg Shabbat is an honor.

Please Volunteer to host the Rabbi
and / or host an Oneg

Weekend Visits	Oneg Host	Friday Dinner Host	Saturday Dinner Host
1 August 28 - 30	Rachel Hadley	Rich Kleitman and Carol Madruga	John and Judith
2 September 11 - 12	The Board	Carol Madruga and Rich Kleitman	---
3 September 20 - 21	No Oneg	Sheryl and Ardene	Break the Fast Potluck
4 October 2 - 4			
5 November 6 - 8			
6 December 4 - 6			Chanukah Party
7 January 22 - 24			Tu B'Shvat Seder
8 February 19 - 21			
9 March 19 - 21			Potluck dinner then Purim Party
10 April 23 23- 25			Community Seder
11 May 7 - 9			

Dinner with the Rabbi can be at your home, or
taking her out to dinner - leaving adequate time
for her to get to our Chavurah House in time.

Hosting the Oneg entails bringing desserts/
treats for the Congregation to enjoy after the
Kabbalat Shabbat Service.

*Please let Ardene (qwestie@aol.com - (209) 631-5898)
or Sheryl (wightsheryl@sbcglobal.net) know
you would like to host the Rabbi for dinner*

Copy this URL: <https://tinyurl.com/Etz-Chaim-Oneg>
to sign up to host an Oneg



Congregation Etz Chaim of Merced

Share the “**Joy of Sabbath**”!

Sign up to co-host an

Oneg Shabbat

after services for the
congregation this year!

The desserts/treats do not
have to be homemade – just
brought with love.

Choose your date(s) at

<https://tinyurl.com/Etz-Chaim-oneg>.



High Holy Days Services 2026/5787

Congregation Etz Chaim

Fireside Room, United Methodist Church

899 Yosemite Parkway, Merced **

LED BY STUDENT RABBI JOY PLUMMER

ROSH HASHANAH

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 11

7:00 p.m.

Evening Service

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 12

10:00 a.m.

Morning Torah Service
followed by a no host luncheon
with the Student Rabbi at 510 Bistro,
followed by a Tashlich Service
on the Bridge at Rahilly Park

YOM KIPPUR

SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 20

7:00 p.m.

Kol Nidre Service

MONDAY
SEPTEMBER 21

10:00 a.m.

Morning Torah Service

1:00 p.m.

Healing Service

2:00 p.m.

Open Discussion

4:00 p.m.

Lesson

5:30 p.m.

Yizkor (Memorial Service)

6:30 p.m.

Neila (Closing Service)

7:30 p.m.

Havdalah, Kiddush and
Break-the-Fast Potluck

- It is traditional at this time of year to make donations in memory of loved ones. Please fill out a **Yizkor Card**. You may mail your card and donation to P.O. Box 3752, Merced 95344-3752 or give to Rachel Hadley or Rich Kleitman no later than Kol Nidre. Other donations will also be gratefully accepted throughout the High Holy Days.
** Please contact Greg Friedman for ZOOM link information
*** For our **Break-the-Fast**, please bring a main dish, and either a side dish or dessert - enough to feed your group heartily (these people will be hungry!)
- Tzedakah (food or clothing) for the less privileged in our community is welcome at any service



It's time for Sukkah Building!



Saturday, September 26th!

9:00am: Sukkah Building

Bagels & cream cheese provided!

Bring creativity!

5:30pm: Sukkot Potluck

Bring food!

All will be on the Chavurah House Patio

RSVP to Rich Kleitman at erkarkdad@gmail.com by Sept 20th.



Puzzle Page Sudoku

		9	6		5	1		
	3			1			5	
7								2
		7				8		
	9		3		8		1	
	5		1		6		9	
	7		5		2		6	
		8				2		

2026/ 2027 Annual Dues are DUE

Our Fiscal Year is July - June

\$500.00 per Year per Family Unit

Please mail your 2026/ 2027 Dues payment to:

Congregation Etz Chaim

P O Box 3752

Merced CA 95344

For those who prefer, we do accept monthly Dues payments year round

More Beautiful than Before...



*Please send your tributes to:
Congregation Etz Chaim, P O Box 3752, Merced, CA 95344*

Congregation Etz Chaim gratefully acknowledges the following tributes:

Sara Jane Victor in loving memory of her husband Marty Victor

Sara Jane Victor in loving memory of her son Philip Victor

Linda Anne Rebhun in loving memory of her father Lionel Rebhun

Linda Anne Rebhun in loving memory of her mother Mildred Rebhun

May their memories be a blessing זכרונם לברכה

Sara Jane Victor with fond memories of their time in Merced and the many friends they made while here.



August Yahrzeits

Rose Bauman
 Sylvia Blatt
 Jacqueline Davis
 Lillian Davis
 Al Fromson
 Sanford Gobler
 Bertha Goldstein
 Bill Griffith
 Ruth Lasman
 Lillian Misrack
 Miriam Newman
 Mildred Rebhun
 Lionel Rebhun
 Mary Robinson
 Marcia Rosenbaum
 Elisabeth Lowy Rosenzweig
 Isaac Schkloven
 Edna Tucker

In the year of their passing

Mary Kaplan (01-2026)

זכרונם לברכה

May their memories be a blessing

Birthdays

Adam Kleitman 8/4
 Tommy Giventer 8/12
 Eileen Ambrosini 8/22
 Elisa Kleitman 8/22

Sudoku Solution

2	8	9	6	3	5	1	4	7
6	3	4	2	1	7	9	5	8
7	1	5	8	9	4	6	3	2
1	6	7	4	5	9	8	2	3
4	9	2	3	7	8	5	1	6
8	5	3	1	2	6	7	9	4
3	7	1	5	8	2	4	6	9
5	4	8	9	6	3	2	7	1
9	2	6	7	4	1	3	8	5