Dear Chai members;

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Neve Shalom Synagogue and the Jewish community in Suriname, I wish you and your families a Happy and kosher Passover!!

With the coronavirus now globally spread, we hope and pray for the well being of you and your loved ones. Stay safe!

We have lots of exciting news to share with you, but this time, before we begin with reporting on our holiday celebrations since our last newsletter, we would like to ask for your support as we are facing some unexpected challenges that need an immediate solution:

**Termites**

Our Synagogue, the attached office and the community center (Mahamad) are all wooden structures, a few hundred years old. We are maintaining them on an ongoing basis; they are magnificent and in great shape generally. However, lately they are under a massive attack by termites which devastate the buildings’ structure. The estimated cost to treat the buildings to prevent termite damage is USD 3,400.

We ask you, our Chai members, to make a donation to help us to cover some of the costs. Every donation, small or large is highly appreciated! Donation from the USA and Canada are eligible for tax receipts.

Please feel free to email me for details on how to donate.

My email is: surjewicom@gmail.com
Or dingoSon3@gmail.com

Thank you very much for your kindness!!

And now to our Chai news:
Rosh Hashanah (September 29 – October 1, 2019)

Celebrating the High Holidays in Suriname is a very special experience. We had almost one hundred members and guests attending the services. Mr. Loekie Robles came from Aruba to help our Chazan (Cantor) Shul Donk and Jacques Reeder to conduct the services. The Tashlich ceremony was performed along the banks of the Suriname river.

Yom Kippur (October 8 – 9, 2019)

Before Yom Kippur, the members gathered in the cemeteries to say prayers at the graves of their loved ones.

Yehudah Webster came from New York to help run the Yom Kippur services. Yehuda’s Torah chanting is such a pleasure.

For me, celebrating the High Holidays with the Suriname Jewish community is a special spiritual experience.

Yehudah conducted a beautiful Havdalah service and we concluded the holiday with a “breaking the fast” dinner among wonderful friends.
Sukkot (October 13 – 20, 2019)

As always, we built our community Sukkah in our synagogue grounds.

We experienced torrential rains the days before Sukkot. The city streets were completely flooded and so were the synagogue’s grounds.

But the building of the Sukkah was completed on time. The high water subsided and the community managed to gather in our beautifully decorated Sukkah to eat and socialize.

Simchat Torah (October 21, 2019)

In Simchat Torah ("Rejoicing with the Torah" in Hebrew) we celebrate and mark the conclusion of the annual cycle of public Torah readings, and the beginning of a new cycle. All of the Torah scrolls are taken from the Ark, and members of the congregation circle the reader’s platform seven times as they carry the Torah scroll with them.

The joyous climax of Simchat Torah is the dancing of hakafot ("circles" or “going around”), during which we dance and sing with the Torah scrolls. The hakafot is a memorable event, certainly one of the highlights on the Jewish calendar.
The Hakafot ceremony led by Marinus (Don) Visbeen

After circling the synagogue, we continued with the hakafot inside the synagogue building.

Hanukkah (December 22 – 30, 2019)

Hanukkah is always a fun holiday. After each family lit their own Menorah in the Mahamad (our community hall), the place was full of light.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day, designated by the United Nations as January 27th, is also the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – Birkenau. In the ceremony, we remember the 104 Surinamese Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust and the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust and work to prevent future genocides.

As part of this education, we unveiled a marker that explains in English and Dutch what the Holocaust was. It is hard to believe, but we noticed that so many visitors who see our Holocaust Memorial Monument do not know what the Holocaust was.

Mr. Jerry Klinger, the President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation suggested to put the marker near the Monument. Mr. Klinger also generously funded the project.

We would like to thank two individuals for their special contribution:
Mr. Philip Dikland, the architect who designed our beautiful Holocaust Memorial Monument and

Mr. Klinger (not Jerry), a local businessman who provided us with the black granite and engraved the golden letters on it,

They both helped us again with the design and construction of the marker so it will be an integral part of the monument.

We are so grateful for their support and help. Both are extremely busy professionals, but they made sure that the marker would be ready on time and it looks amazing.

Thank you Philip and Mr. Klinger!

The beautiful ceremony was attended by members of the community, Surinamese dignitaries and the last four Surinamese World War 2 veterans who fought the German and the Japanese. The four veterans, all in their mid 90’s were honoured in unveiling the marker.
Giyur (Conversion) Course is Underway

After more than ten years of waiting, a group of candidates for Giyur (conversion) is studying under the supervision of Rabbi Meno Ten Brink from The Netherlands. Rabbi Ten Brink has already visited Suriname twice in the last few months. The class is continuing to study with our President, Jules (Shul) Donk on a weekly basis.

The group includes non Jewish spouses of community members, people with ancestral ties to the community who decided to come back to their roots and people who are interested in Judaism and made the decision to join. Many of them have been attending services for a long period of time but did not have the means to convert earlier.

We are excited that after a decade of waiting, the class is on its way.

The Cemeteries Project

Our amazing volunteers, Isabella Lo who came from Denmark and Scott Forler who came from the USA spent a month documenting the unmarked tombs in both the Ashkenazi and Sephardic cemeteries in Paramaribo. Every day, from 6 am till late afternoon, they were working hard in the heat. I joined them for two weeks and Ms Lilly Duym was managing the project.

We are obtaining quotes for the cost of each grave marker, which will consist of an aluminum plate plus the engraving of the names and dates of birth and death, the post itself and the labour to erect it. In addition, Lilly is analyzing how many unmarked graves are in the Ashkenazi cemetery and in the Sephardic cemetery. We received a generous donation of over USD 2,000 from the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation to start the project.
Once we determine the complete number of markers required in each cemetery and the cost per marker, we will fundraise for the money that will be required to complete this important project.

**Replacing Windows at the Tzedek ve Shalom Synagogue**

16 windows in our 286 year old Tzedek ve Shalom Synagogue (“Justice and Peace” in Hebrew) were leaking and had to be replaced before causing extensive damage to the historic building. The custom made windows were replaced in late February. We are greatful to the two donors - a Chai member family from the Netherlands and the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation. Thank you so much for your generosity!

The 12 new custom made windows were installed
The Mikvah Roof

Our over 150 year old Mikvah roof is leaking and needs to be replaced. The preliminary estimated cost is over USD 1,000. We will have to address this challenge after Passover.

Preparing for Passover

Passover in Suriname is a big challenge. We have to import from the USA our Matzot and Kosher wine. The products then have to be shipped by sea to Suriname, cleared with customs and delivered to the community on time, and that is not an easy task.

The economic crisis in Suriname is in its fourth year and the Suriname government’s restriction on the use of foreign currencies is making the importing of products for the Passover Seder a real challenge. Thanks to the financial support of our Chai members, we managed to import the products this year as in the last few years. Thank you so much for your generosity!

Final Comments

I’d like to thank Mr. Jerry Klinger, the President of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation for his on-going support with ideas and donations. A special person who is doing the right things when no one is watching.

To Donna Eckie, Joan Duym, Marina da Costa, and other friends for their lovely photos;

To Lilly Duym for her on-going support, to the Chai membership program and to Norma Hutchison-Steinberg for her editing of this newsletter.

And finally, wishing that in all our communities we can adapt our daily living, including religious observance, but still keep the care and loving in these difficult times.

Please feel free to contact me at: dingoson3@gmail.com

Jacob Steinberg