



Cantor Ivor Lichterman points out the new Torah mantles gifted to him at his anniversary celebration at Congregation B'nai Israel in Sylvania.

THE BLADE/LIZZIE HEINTZ

A NEW YEAR

Congregation B’nai Israel, an anniversary celebration sets the tone for High Holidays

By SARAH READDEAN  
BLADE STAFF WRITER

Cantor Ivor Lichterman is preparing to observe his 12th Jewish New Year at Congregation B’nai Israel in Sylvania. His preparations were interrupted last weekend for a celebration honoring his dedicated service to the congregation. It brought the largest crowd the congregation has seen since the pandemic, suggesting the congregation feels it’s safe to return, underscoring the strength of their

community bond, and leaving high hopes for the upcoming High Holidays. Rosh Hashanah, or the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, known as the Day of Atonement, were observed last fall with in-person services, but the congregation saw lower than usual attendance and required masking and proof of vaccination. Congregants are making their return, though not quite in their pre-pandemic numbers, according to the congregation’s leader. The anniversary saw around 150 guests on each of the two days of

the celebration. “This past weekend was an indication of how well we think our attendance will be on these High Holidays,” said Cantor Lichterman, the congregation’s sole clergy member, who was honored, belatedly, for his 10 years of service. Although the weeks leading up to the High Holidays focus reflection on and preparation for the new year, Cantor Lichterman’s brother said this anniversary celebration puts the congregation “on

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The left and right Torah mantles were gifted to Cantor Ivor Lichterman at his anniversary celebration at Congregation B’nai Israel in Sylvania.

THE BLADE/  
LIZZIE HEINTZ



A scene from the television show 'The Waltons.'

CBS ARCHIVE

‘The Waltons’ still stir spirituality, nostalgia

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Rev. Matt Curry’s parents were children of the Great Depression, just like *The Waltons* — the beloved TV family whose prime-time series premiered 50 years ago. When Mr. Curry was growing up on a farm in northern Texas, his carpenter father and teacher mother often argued playfully over who had a poorer childhood. “The Depression was the seminal time of their lives — the time that was about family and survival and making it through,” said Mr. Curry, now a 59-year-old Presbyterian pastor in Owensboro, Ky. “My dad used to talk about how his dad would go work out of town and send \$5 a week to feed and clothe the family.” So when *The Waltons*, set in 1932 and running through World War II, debuted on CBS on Sept. 14, 1972, the Currys

identified closely with the storylines. Millions of others felt the same, and the Thursday night drama about a Depression-era family in rural Virginia became one of TV’s most popular and enduring programs. At a time when the networks generally avoided “dangerous” content, *The Waltons* was notable for taking on difficult topics — religion, in particular — said Robert Thompson, director of Syracuse University’s Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture. “I think it was an important show, and I think it actually doesn’t get the attention that it deserves,” Mr. Thompson said. “*The Waltons* really did get down and roll around in some very, very serious spiritual themes,” he added. “For example, an atheist comes to town, See WALTONS, Page F4

First Church honors Bishop Robert Culp

Bishop Robert Culp is stepping down at Toledo’s First Church of God. A weekend of celebration honors Bishop Culp, who has served the congregation since 1961, as well as Pastor Eric Butler, who will take on the lead pastor role at First Church. The congregation dedicated a service to Bishop Culp on Friday, inviting community members to share remarks on his impact. Pastor Butler was set to be installed on Saturday. Bishop Robbie Davis from Maryland will lead a service at 10 a.m. Sunday. First Church is at 3016 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo.



Bishop Robert Culp



BARRY MCCALL

Father Ray Kelly, the singing priest.

‘Singing Priest’ to return

Father Ray Kelly, known as the “Singing Priest” returns to Historic Church of St. Patrick on Sept. 25. The 69-year-old singing Catholic priest from Ireland released his third album, *Hallelujah Day*, in 2021.

OFFERINGS

BLADE STAFF

Father Kelly performs at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and benefit the church and Deacon Tom Carone’s outreach program. Historic St. Pat’s is at 130 Avondale Ave., Toledo. Contact Maury Collins at 419-699-6710 with questions.

Sylvania First Christian Church celebrates 104 years

First Christian Church in Sylvania celebrates its 104th anniversary with community events and worship services Friday through Sept. 25. A revival-style praise and worship service kicks off the celebration at 7 p.m. Friday. A community meal as well as games, face painting, speakers, live music, and a 50/50 drawing will be noon to 5 p.m. Saturday. Another revival worship service with dedications and thanksgiving will be held at 10:30 a.m. Sept. 25. During the coffee hour afterward, attendees can learn about the church’s history. All events take place at First Christian Church, 5271 W. Alexis Rd., Sylvania. The church’s congregation was first housed across the street from its current location, where Regency Hospital now is, and its present space was built in 1956. The church has plans to restore the sanctuary in the near future.

International Day of Peace

Locals are invited to participate in a gathering, march, and speeches for the United Nations International Day of Peace on Wednesday. Toledo Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz and city councilman Michele Grim will share remarks. The event is sponsored by more than 25 organizations including houses of worship, colleges, and various advocacy groups. It begins at noon at the Lucas County Courthouse, 700 Adams St., Toledo.

Fostoria hosts Catholic author

Chris Stefanick, a prominent Catholic

author and speaker, comes to Fostoria on Wednesday for *Reboot!*, an event focusing on bringing the gospel into daily life and community. The event is rescheduled from 2020, and is hosted in partnership with St. Wendelin Parish. It is open to ages 12 and up. The talk starts at 7 p.m. in the Fostoria Junior/Senior High School auditorium, 1001 Park Ave., Fostoria. Tickets are \$39, or \$30 each with a purchase of four or more. For tickets or more information, go to [reallifecatholic.com](http://reallifecatholic.com).

Padre Pio Prayer Group celebrates feast day

The Padre Pio Prayer Group celebrates the saint’s feast day at Christ the King Fellowship Hall on Friday. Speakers Homero Ortiz and Xiaoyu Zhu will share about Padre Pio’s life and his healing by Our Lady of Fatima. The event is held twice, 1 to 3 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m., at 4100 Harvest Lane, Toledo. Ms. Zhu will only present at the later session. Email [magdalena@magdalenaskiles.com](mailto:magdalena@magdalenaskiles.com) for details or to join the prayer group.

Nurses join for faith and well-being retreat

Self-care is the focus of the Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan Faith Community Nurse Association’s fall retreat. An interactive “Tending the Garden of Your Soul” program led by art therapist Claudia St. Clair will demonstrate de-stressing techniques using all five senses. The retreat runs 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday at First Presbyterian Church, 200 E. Broadway St., Maumee. Registration is \$35 and can be paid by cash or check the day of the retreat.

— SARAH READDEAN





Joel Lichterman, left, and Ivor Lichterman stand with a portrait of their father Jakub Lichterman. The brothers come from a lineage of Jewish cantors.

## Cantor

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another high.”

“I think [this] is a wonderful stepping stone of foundation for the coming High Holidays,” said Joel Lichterman, who is also a cantor and conducted the weekend’s services. “It’s a building block for the next couple of years. ... Look what we’ve done, look what we’re capable of doing.”

The post-pandemic celebration “felt like the right event at the right time,” administrator Gabrielle Mallin said, to appreciate what they have and the cantor’s dedication.

“People in this community know that what we have has to be cherished,” she said. “It gives people a reason to be joyful together and a reason to come back to the synagogue.”

### Honoring Hazzan

“They told me that congregation CBI / Is going to honor me. I said, ‘Please tell me why.’ / They said, ‘For 12 years, you’ve been our guy.’ / ‘Our cantor, our hazzan, and acting rabbi.’”

Cantor Lichterman recited Monday the song he wrote as his response to remarks given during the meal in his honor on Sept. 9. The song was to the tune of a common Jewish hymn, he said, and continued on to thank members of the congregation.

The cantor’s responsibilities grew in 2013 when he took on full leadership after the former Rabbi Moshe Saks left Congregation B’nai Israel. A cantor, or hazzan, leads song during Jewish services. With the right qualifications, a cantor can also take on rabbinical duties such as giving sermons, counseling, and teaching conversion classes.

The anniversary celebration was organized by Anne and Jeff Bauer and Ann and Howard



The dedication inside the Torah mantles gifted to Cantor Ivor Lichterman at his anniversary celebration at Congregation B’nai Israel in Sylvania.

Rosenberg. They presented a gift of two Torah covers for Cantor Lichterman that were purchased through member donations.

They commissioned artist Jeanette Kuvin Oren to make the covers, also called mantles. Ms. Mallin selected a “creation” design — blue fabric adorned with sun rays, a moon, and stars — to coordinate with the sanctuary’s center mantle, which depicts a burning bush.

“We were really just over the moon and grateful that we had the funds to be able to make something that looked cohesive and to present something that beautiful in honor of the cantor,” Ms. Mallin said.

Also special to the weekend was the attendance of Cantor Lichterman’s family. At the dinner, his wife, mother-in-law, brother, and son each gave a speech.

“It marks a milestone in one’s career because it’s recognition of what you have contributed to that community,” his brother said on Monday.

Joel Lichterman is a retired cantor from Denver and now

leads services around the country wherever there’s a need. He offered the anniversary services, while Ivor Lichterman and David Friedes served as cantors.

Ivor and Joel Lichterman enjoy singing together, and don’t need to practice much.

“We know where each other is going,” Ivor Lichterman said. “We come from the same background. ... It’s an instinct, a musical instinct.”

### Levitical legacy

The Lichterman brothers’ family descended from the Tribe of Levi, who the Old Testament says were musicians.

“We are descended from the original cantors and choirs of the temple,” Ivor Lichterman said.

Their father, Jakub Lichterman, and grandfather, Yitzchak Meir Lichterman, were cantors in Warsaw, Poland. After surviving the Holocaust, Jakub Lichterman made his way to South Africa, where his sons were born and raised.

Lining the shelves of his office, Ivor Lichterman has bind-

ers and folders full of documents, articles, teachings, and music. He selects from his father’s “cantorial treasure trove of European music” for his own services in Ohio.

While the work of a cantor and rabbi is a sacrifice of time to oneself and family, Cantor Lichterman finds fulfillment in keeping alive the legacy of his family lineage.

“On our father’s tombstone in Capetown Jewish Cemetery, at the bottom of the stone is a famous Jewish quote in Hebrew that says, ‘The Jewish melody lives on forever.’” he said.

“This is what we know, this is what we do,” he continued. “We do it every day of our lives, with love, to keep the music alive, and to keep the Jewish community alive.”

Congregation B’nai Israel will observe Rosh Hashanah Sept. 25-27, Yom Kippur Oct. 4-5, and Sukkot Oct. 9-18. Services will be in person for members and their families, and live streamed at [cbi-toledo.org/live-stream](http://cbi-toledo.org/live-stream).

Contact Sarah Readdean at: [sreaddean@theblade.com](mailto:sreaddean@theblade.com).

## Waltons

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and we get this whole discussion between atheism and spirituality.”

The *Waltons* ran for nine seasons and 221 episodes, ranking as high as No. 2 in the Nielsen ratings. A half-century later it still stirs nostalgia among loyal fans who can’t resist taking in cable TV reruns, bingeing episodes via streaming apps, and keeping up with former stars through social media.

Based on the life of its creator, the late Earl Hamner Jr., the show followed a large extended family living in a white, two-story farmhouse and running a sawmill in the fictional Blue Ridge foothills town of Walton’s Mountain. The parents, grandparents, and seven children — John Jr., Jason, Mary Ellen, Erin, Ben, Jim-Bob, and Elizabeth — were depicted wearing overalls and dresses, praying at meals, and overcoming adversity through hard work and grace.

The *Waltons* focused on John Jr., known as John-Boy, played by Richard Thomas and modeled on Mr. Hamner. The oldest sibling, he aspired to be a writer and experience the world beyond his humble upbringing.

Now 71 and starring as lawyer Atticus Finch in a touring production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Thomas said he still hears fans call “Good night, John-Boy!” after each performance. The familiar catchphrase pays homage to the Emmy-winning role that made him famous.

“It’s kind of astonishing that we’re still talking about a show 50 years later,” said Thomas, who narrates *A Walton’s Thanksgiving*, a made-for-TV movie airing this fall on the CW network.

“To have that kind of longevity and then have it mean enough for people to want to do a new version of it — I’m not sure exactly why,” he added. “I know it affected a lot of people’s lives. But I think primarily Earl Hamner’s writing was just so great and the cast loved each other so much and we were so committed.”

John-Boy had a lot to do with the show’s popularity — and inspired many a crush back then among fans like Jerri Harrington, now 67, of Centerville, Va.

Ms. Harrington still watches an episode every night with her husband of 47 years. During the frightening early days of the coronavirus pandemic, she said, its characters — particularly grandma Esther, played by the late Ellen Corby — brought a sense of comfort and return to childhood.

“It just feels familiar,” said Ms. Harrington, a grandmother herself.

Another lifelong fan, Carol Jackson, like Mr. Curry the daughter of Depression-era parents, sees her own family’s story reflected.

She became a fan as a kindergartner and as an adult placed *Waltons* DVDs in the resort cabins that her family operated in the Ozarks of northern Arkansas. The homespun stories still connect with the 55-year-old mother of three.

“I just told my kids, ‘One day when I’m old and in my wheelchair ... just wheel me in front of *The Waltons* on a continual loop, and I’ll be happy,’” Ms. Jackson said.

Kami Cotler, who was 6 years old when she first starred as youngest sibling Elizabeth in a 1971 holiday TV movie that launched the series, still interacts regularly with such fans via her Facebook page, which has nearly 150,000 followers.

Ms. Cotler said *The Waltons* shared “universal truths” that help explain its lasting popularity.

“The show frequently told really simple human stories that resonate with people because that’s what life is like,” said Ms. Cotler, now an educator in Southern California. “People will joke that it was very saccharine sweet, but I don’t think that it actually was.”

On the show, parents John Walton Sr. and Olivia Walton — played, respectively, by the late Ralph Waite, an ordained minister in real life, and Michael Learned — frequently clashed over their differing approaches to God. Olivia was a devout Baptist, but John Sr. was not a churchgoer.

“I’ve always looked for God in my own way,” he said in one episode.

An ongoing theme was the appearance in Walton’s Mountain of an outsider — a Jewish family fleeing Nazi persecution, a Black boxer and preacher raising money for a new church, a Hollywood actress who smoked and drank — who met a mixed reception.

In 1972’s “The Sinner” episode, a young pastor played by the late John Ritter arrived preaching fire-and-brimstone Bible verses. But he inadvertently became intoxicated after drinking too much of the “secret recipe” served by the Baldwin sisters, two prim and proper recurring characters who didn’t seem to realize they were bootleggers.

After the mishap touched off something of a scandal, John Sr. made a rare appearance at church and pointed to Jesus’ words from John 8:7: “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.”

“The religious aspect of the show had to do with the fact that Earl Hamner was talking about a time and a place ... where those issues were very much in play,” said Mr. Thomas, now a grandfather of four. “I mean, in a small community in the mountains of Virginia in the Depression, if you don’t deal with the church aspect of things, then you don’t deal with things as they were.”

Over the show’s long run, the *Waltons* and their neighbors learned valuable lessons about overcoming differences and treating everyone with love and respect. Those lessons, Ms. Cotler said, “are perhaps even more relevant today.”

On a personal note, Ms. Cotler, a secular Jew, credits grandpa Zeb, played by the late Will Geer, with teaching her how to sing church songs on the show.

Mr. Curry, the Kentucky pastor, said *The Waltons* reflected how Jesus often rebukes religious people for hypocrisy in the Bible, while commending an unexpected person for showing love and grace.

The show “talked about religion and faith ... in a way that does not demean people,” Mr. Curry said. “There’s something in there that we are missing today, and it’s the sense of community, of unity, of battling through hard times.”

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