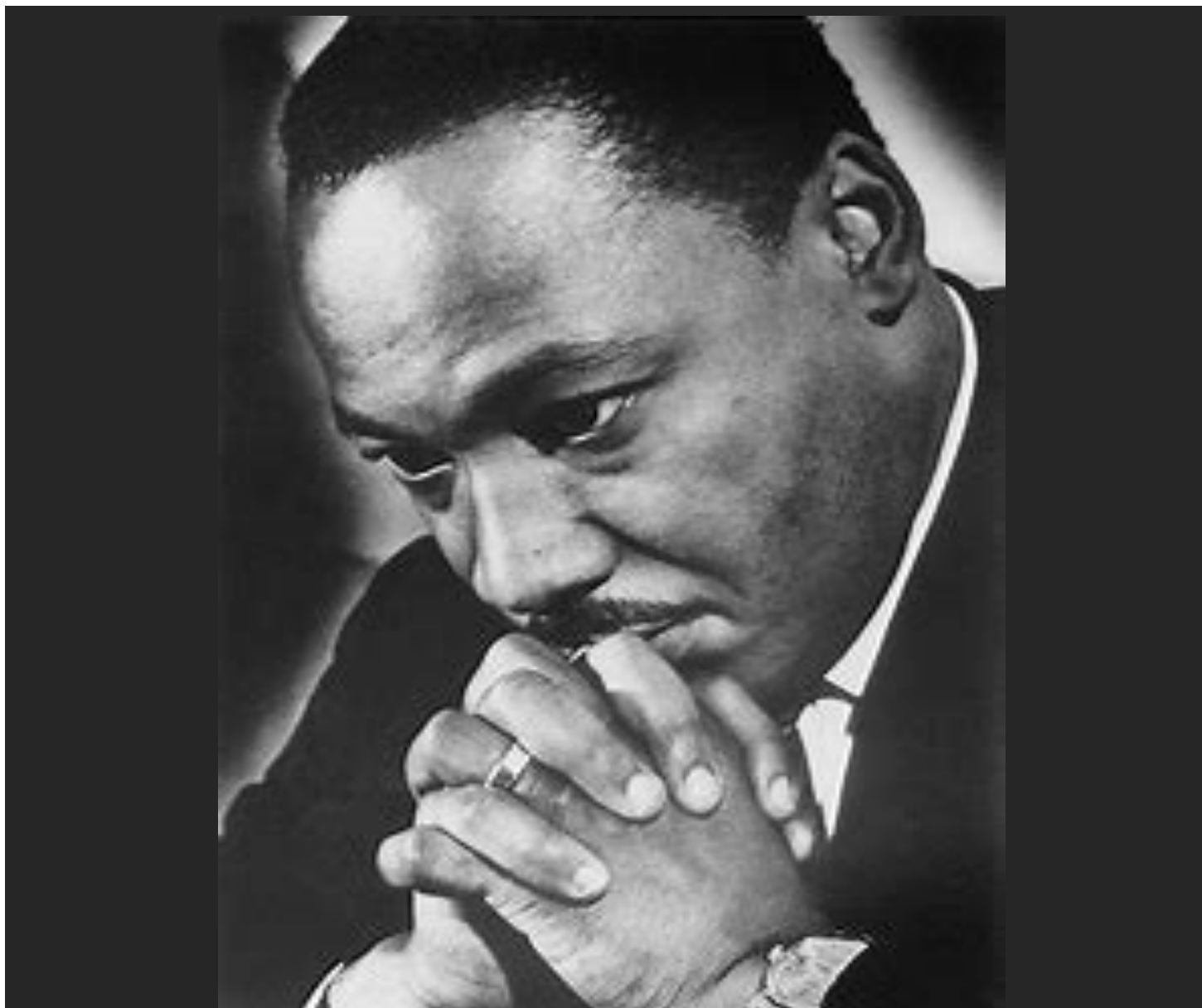


MLK Day of Learning:

A Knock At Midnight

January 16, 2022



REFORM CONGREGATION
KENESETH ISRAEL
FOUNDED 1847



Program

MLK Day of Learning 2022: A Knock At Midnight

❖ Welcome and Introduction

❖ What Time Is It? Is It Midnight?

Social Order

○ *Arlene Holtz*

Psychological Order

○ *Charletta Zeigler*

○ *Rawan Zalzala*

○ *Steven Glauzer*

❖ Who's Knocking At The Door?

○ *Marlene Glass*

○ *Valara Cheristin*

○ *Alison LaLond Wyant*

○ *Rachel Goff*

○ *Sandy Lieberman*

○ *Cathryn Miller-Wilson*

○ *Max Milkman*

❖ Will Someone Answer the Door

○ *Amelia Goode*

○ *Rob DeKalb*

○ *Sally Heimann.*

○ *Carol Copeland*

○ *Paulette Sterman-Soroko, Sue Fried, Mindi Glachman,
Lynore Eisman,*

○ *Barbara McNeil*

○ *Sousan Robinson*

❖ Living Room Conversations

❖ Musical Inspiration

Welcome

A Knock At Midnight,

February 11, 1962

The theme of KI's 3rd Annual MLK Day of Learning is *A Knock At Midnight*, the title of a [sermon](#) that Dr. King first delivered as early as 1958. The sermon is based on a parable about a man who knocks on the door of his neighbor's house at midnight asking for three loaves of bread to feed a friend who had arrived for a visit. He asks for bread because he has nothing to offer his guest. The sermon addresses the power of persistence in knocking, and the power of responding with "bread."

In the sermon, Dr. King related the parable to the circumstances of his day (1950's and 1960's). First, he asserted that it was midnight in the world. Then he described the ways that people were knocking to have their needs met. He identified the bread that they sought, and exhorted communities of faith to open the door to answer the knock to provide bread at midnight for those who need it.

Along with our partners -- EMIC (Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition), Penn State Abington, and Arcadia University -- we will use these elements of the sermon to reflect on our present day and the ways that both individuals and institutions can answer the knock at midnight to help one another out of agonizing darkness and into the dawn. .

First we consider Dr. King's description of midnight in the social, moral, and psychological orders, and how we similarly encounter midnight in these orders today. Why is it midnight today? Is it hopelessness or the darkness before the dawn? Is it inability to make distinctions, or confusion, or something else? **Next** we turn to the theme of knocking on our neighbor's door. Dr. King spoke about the need for persistence as one goes knocking on doors, and the importance of knowing "where there is bread." We relate this need for persistence to our own efforts. **Finally**, Dr. King described the loaves of bread that meet the needs of those knocking. He identified the bread of Faith, of Hope, and Love, the bread of Social Justice, of Peace, and of Economic Justice. We could think of other loaves of bread as well like truth, integrity and equity.

In our diverse, sacred traditions there are many times we are called on to respond to a moral reckoning at a time that feels like midnight. To quote from the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism we are asked, "*Ayecha?*" "Where are you?" And we are called to respond with

“Hineinu.” “We are here.”¹ We hear the knocking, and we are ready to open the door to those seeking social, racial and economic justice, peace and safety from gun violence, voting rights, and actual bread due to food insecurity.

The related reflections will constitute the first hour of our MLK program; and will be followed by interactive (Living Room Conversations) exploring civic, social, emotional and spiritual renewal.

¹ <https://rac.org/issues/racial-justice>

Sermon Excerpts
September 14, 1958

A Knock At Midnight

“Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.” (Luke 11:5, 6)

Although this is a parable dealing with the power of persistent prayer, there is much in it that can serve as a basis for analyzing many of the problems of the modern world The first thing we notice in the parable is that it is midnight. It is also midnight in the world today. The darkness is so deep that we hardly see which way to turn. It is midnight in the social order. . . . This midnight in man's external collective life has brought about midnight in his internal individual life. It is midnight in the psychological order. Everywhere there are people who are harrowed by day and haunted by night with paralyzing fears. Deep clouds of anxiety and depression are floating in so many of our mental skies. . . . All of this is indicative of the fact that it is midnight in the inner lives of men and women.

It is also midnight in the moral order. Midnight is a time when all colors lose their distinctiveness and become merely a dirty shade of gray. In so many instances moral principles have lost their distinctiveness. Nothing is absolutely right or absolutely wrong for modern man; it is just a matter of what the majority of people are doing. For most people right and wrong are merely relative to their likes and dislikes and the customs of their particular community. . . . According to the ethic of midnight the only sin is to get caught and the only virtue is to get by. It's all right to lie, but do it with real finesse; it's all right to steal, but be a dignified stealer, so that if you are caught it becomes embezzlement rather than robbery; it's all right even to hate, but dress your hate up in the garments of love and make it appear that you are loving when you are actually hating. So in place of the Darwinian survival of the fittest, many have substituted a philosophy of the survival of the slickest. This has led to a tragic breakdown of moral standards. And so the midnight of moral degeneration grows deeper and deeper.

But, as in the parable, so in our world today, the deep darkness of the midnight is interrupted by the sound of a knock. . . . But the many who come and knock are desperately seeking a little bread to tide them over. Like the man in the parable, they are asking for three loaves of bread. They want the bread of faith. Living through a generation of so many colossal disappointments, with one towering frustration piled on another, so many men have lost faith in God, faith in man, and faith in the future. Many feel somewhat like Wilberforce felt in 1801 when he said: “I dare not marry—the future is so unsettled;” or

as William Pitt felt in 1806 when he said: “There is scarcely anything round us but ruin and despair.” In the midst of this staggering disillusionment, many are crying out for the bread of faith. There is also a deep longing for the bread of hope. Many who lived in the early days of this century did not feel the need of seeking this bread. Living in the days of the first telephones, the first automobiles, and the first airplanes caused them to grow up with a radiant optimism. They worshiped at the shrine of Herbert Spencer's doctrine of inevitable progress. They believed that every new scientific achievement was lifting man to higher levels of perfection. But then came a series of tragic developments which revealed the selfishness and corruption of man, and pointed out with frightening clarity the truth of Lord Acton's dictum: “Power tends to corrupt. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” This awful discovery led to one of the most colossal breakdowns of optimism in history.

For so many people, young and old, the light of hope has gone out, and they roam wearily in the dark chambers of pessimism. . . . But in spite of the inevitable moments when all seems hopeless, men know that without some sense of hope they are really dead while they live. So in agonizing desperation they are crying for the bread of hope. Then there is the deep longing for the bread of love. Everybody wants to love and be loved. He who feels that he isn't loved feels that he is nobody, that he doesn't count. So much has happened in the modern world to make men feel that they don't belong. Caught in the chains of injustice and the manacles of discrimination, many of us are left feeling that we are things rather than persons. . . . When the man in the parable knocked on the door of his friend and asked for the three loaves of bread, he received the impatient retort: “Don't bother me! The door is fastened, and my children and I have gone to bed; I cannot get up and give you any.” In other words, this man was left disappointed at midnight. . . . As we turn to the parable again we notice that in spite of the man's initial disappointment he continued to knock on the door of his Friend. . . . Because of his importunity—his persistence, his urgent plea—he was able to persuade his Friend to open the door. It is very doubtful that the man in need of bread would have continued to knock on the friend's door if he had had the slightest notion that there was no bread in his house. He would have left immediately after the Friend impatiently told him to leave. But even though he was at first disappointed he continued to knock because he knew that some bread was in that house. . . . Many young people will knock on the door who are perplexed by the uncertainties of life, confused by the disappointments of life and disillusioned by the ambiguities of history. . . . We must provide them with the fresh bread of hope, and imbue them with the conviction that God is still working with this old sinful world, and he has the power to ring the good out of the evil. . . . Midnight is a confusing hour, and one in which it is difficult to be faithful; but

the relevancy and power of the church will be measured by its capacity to meet the needs of those who come at midnight. The most inspiring word that the church can say to men at midnight is that no midnight is here to stay.

The weary traveller by midnight who is asking for bread is really asking for the dawn. Our eternal message of hope is that dawn will come. Midnight is only a temporary development in the cycle of life's day. Our slave foreparents realized this. They were never unmindful of the fact of midnight, for there was always the rawhide whip of the overseer and the auction block where families were torn asunder to remind them of its reality. So when they thought of midnight with all of its agonizing darkness they sang: Oh, Nobody knows de trouble I've seen; Sometimes I'm up, sometimes I'm down Oh, yes, Lord, Sometimes, I'm almost to de groun', Oh, yes, Lord. Oh, nobody knows de trouble I've seen, Glory Hallelujah. But even though encompassed by a staggering midnight, they had faith to believe that morning would come. . . . Yes, the dawn will come. Disappointment, sorrow and despair are all born in midnight, but we may be consoled by the fact that morning will come. "Weeping may tarry for a night," says the Psalmist, "but joy cometh in the morning." This is the faith that will adjourn the assemblies of hopelessness, and bring new light into the dark chambers of pessimism.

King, "A Knock at Midnight," 14 September 1958, pp. 348-350 in this volume.

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/draft-chapter-vi-knock-midnight>

Living Room Conversations

Civic, Social Emotional and Spiritual Renewal



Respect. Relate. Connect.



Conversation Guide: Social, Emotional, and Spiritual Renewal

Living Room Conversations offers a simple, sociable and structured way to practice communicating across differences while building understanding and relationships. Typically, 4-7 people meet in person or by video call for about 90 minutes to listen to and be heard by others on one of our nearly 100 [topics](#). Rather than debating or convincing others, we take turns talking to share and learn, and be curious. No preparation is required, though background links with balanced views are available on some topic pages online. *Anyone can host using these italicized instructions. Hosts also participate.*

Introductions: Why We're Here (~5-10 minutes)

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

- Share your name, where you live, what drew you here, and if this is your first conversation.

Conversation Agreements: How We'll Engage (~5 minutes)

These will set the tone of our conversation; participants may volunteer to take turns reading them aloud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might enjoy exploring how others' experiences have shaped their values and perspectives.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** People tend to judge one another. Setting judgement aside opens you up to learning from others and makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to truly listen, without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed. Use an agreed upon signal like the "time out" sign if you feel the agreements are not

being honored.

Question Rounds: What We'll Talk About

Optional: a participant can keep track of time and gently let people know when their time has elapsed.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~10 min)

Each participant can take 1-2 minutes to answer one of these questions:

- What are your hopes and concerns for your family, community and/or the country as it relates to Social, Emotional, and Spiritual wellbeing?

Round Two: Exploring the Topic -- Civic Renewal (~40 min)

One participant can volunteer to read this paragraph.

Our civic life is about the infinite ways that we may connect and contribute to our community and society; from voting in an election to supporting a local business, to mentoring a student or helping an immigrant to master English. Now when it comes to our social, emotional, and spiritual life - our wellbeing is tied to how we understand ourselves, relate to others, and experience belonging and purpose.

For some time now, however, many aspects of our social, emotional, and spiritual lives have been upended. In just the last few years alone, our world has presented us with so many negative influences: pandemic, trauma, exclusion, isolation and violence that impact us daily. Many people feel lost within themselves and others don't feel comfortable or courageous enough in standing for what they believe. This is where we may lose all hope because we see how the world is going, we may lose faith we may lose our spiritual grounding and we may feel an emptiness devoid of love or a sense of belonging.

Today, we want to give everyone the chance to embrace their power, recognize the ways that individuals and institutions can foster connection and support and help create a just and productive community. As we consider the idea of civic, social, emotional, and spiritual renewal in these areas, we are not only going to share how we have been impacted by recent events but also investigate the "loaves of bread" that have nourished us and how we could have handed (or still may hand) these loaves of bread to others despite being in the darkness ourselves. In this conversation, you are invited to talk about your own experiences, tell us what has helped you develop resilience, and what would you like to see possibly happen in our communities moving forward.

We will take 2 minutes each to answer a question without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, we will take a few minutes to clarify or ask follow up questions/give responses. Continue exploring additional questions as time allows.

- In your opinion, what is the most important renewal that everyone in our country OR in our community needs right now? Why is that?

Continue the conversation by taking ~2 minutes each to answer the following question. Select areas that your group wants to explore.

Topic 1: Social Order:

- What is one struggle that our community is going through that could be considered as a kind of midnight why? How can we go about lighting a candle or ushering in the dawn?
- How is the darkness or midnight in our communities and society influencing the darkness or midnight globally?

Topic 2: Psychological Order:

- How can our environment, society, and culture affect our psychological well-being?
- Describe a time in the past two years where your emotional or psychological health was tested. What helped you overcome this experience and what did you learn from it? (For example, the pandemic, how has the pandemic affected your psychological health and how have you coped?)

Topic 3: Moral Order:

- Has there ever been a time where your community stood up for something that you questioned the morality of? What was it and why did you question it?
- Dr. King in his sermon describes midnight as a time when all colors lose their distinctiveness, and midnight in the moral order as a matter of what we think the majority of people are doing. What is one “If everyone is doing it, then it must be right” situation that people are following today?
- What is a time where you couldn't “Just get by”?

Topic 4: Bread of Faith:

- What is one thing in our society that gets in the way of believing in ourselves, in each other, in our country or in the future?
- What is one moment that you felt like you lost your faith?
- What is one way we could share the bread of faith and still be respectful to others' beliefs?

Topic 5: Bread of Hope questions

- What recent events have caused people to lose hope in our society?
- Regarding the criminal legal system, gun laws, policing, and other aspects of laws and law enforcement that we do not have a bigger power in, what can we do to be involved and help spread hope in these situations?
- What can we do to bring hope back into our community?

Topic 6: Bread of Love questions

- What type of love are people looking for today?
- Have you ever been in the need of love and have been disappointed, either by your best friend or any relationship or friendship?

- What is one way we could share the bread of love in our community?
- How do we connect love and belonging?

Topic 7: Keeping the Bread Fresh and Dealing with Disappointment

- How do you keep your own values fresh so that you can offer help to others when they need it?
- What fuels your resilience in the face of disappointment?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~10 - 15 min)

Take 2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

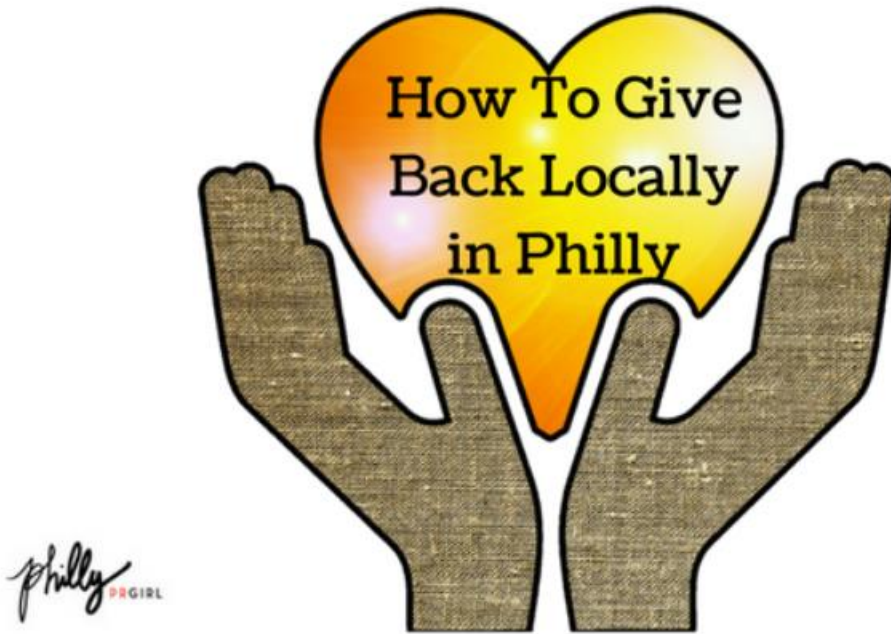
- Where could your community start in order to bridge what divides it?
- What was most meaningful / valuable to you in this Living Room Conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation changed your perception of anyone in this group, including yourself?

Closing (~5 min)

- *Donate!* Make more of these possible; give at livingroomconversations.org/donate/
- *Join or host more conversations!* With a) this group by exchanging your emails; b) others in person and/or by video call online. Get more involved or learn how to host at livingroomconversations.org/get-involved/
- Check out ideas, tools, and stories about ways to enhance civic life on [Thriving.US](https://thriving.us) or sign up [here](#).

Thankyou!

How to Give Back in Philly



[How to give back in Philly: Ways to volunteer, donate, and support local groups \(msn.com\)](#)

[How To Give Back Locally in Philly - Philly PR Girl](#)

Speakers

Valara Cheristin is a Criminal Justice major and Entrepreneurship and Innovation minor at Penn State Abington. She will graduate Spring 2023.

Carol Copland is a member of the Calvary Presbyterian Church, Wyncote and participates in the Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition.

Rob DeKalb is a member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Glenside and participates in the Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition.

Lynore Eisman is President of WRJ/Women of KI. She serves on KI's Board of Directors and is a leader of KI's *HaMotzi* Community Guest Meals.

Sue Fried is Programming VP of WRJ/Women of KI. She serves on KI's Board of Directors and is a leader of KI's *HaMotzi* Community Guest Meals.

Marlene Glass is a member of KI, and its Social Justice Committee, a member of Power and of Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition. She recently joined the Alumni Committee of Interfaith Philadelphia.

Steven Glauser is a consulting psychologist for both for-profit and non-profit organizations. He has taught at Penn's Wharton School of Business and Temple's Fox School of Business. He is a member of KI's Social Justice Committee.

Mindi Glachman, is Past President of WRJ/Women of KI. She is a leader of KI's *HaMotzi* Community Guest Meals.

Rachel Goff is a member of KI's Social Justice Committee. She is actively involved in FairDistrictsPA.

Amelia Goode is a 9th grader at Abington Junior High School. At KI she is a *madricha* and serves on the KIFTY board.

Sally Heimann is a member of the Calvary Presbyterian Church, Wyncote and participates in the Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition.

Arlene B. Holtz is the Chair of the KI Social Justice Committee, and a member of the KI Board of Directors. She is the Board President of Mariana

Bracetti Academy Charter School in Philadelphia and participates in the Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition.

Amy E. Levy has served as cantor of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel since 2004. From the Bar/Bat mitzvah students, to choirs and musical groups, to Sabbath for the Soul Shabbats, and Yiddish music, she makes the worlds of Jewish music and sacred music accessible.

Sandy Lieberman volunteers at HIAS Pennsylvania. She is a member of Or Hadash.

Barbara McNeil is an active member of the Social Justice Committee at KI, and participates in the Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition.

Max Milkman is the organizing manager at CeaseFirePA.

Cathryn Miller-Wilson is the Executive Director of HIAS Pennsylvania.

Sousan Robinson is a member of The Center of Peace, a Center for Spiritual Living community, and she participates in the Eastern MontCo Interfaith Coalition. Sousan is a school counselor and an LPC. She is dedicated to creating a world that honors and works for ALL people.

Paulette Sterman-Soroko, is Programming VP of WRJ/Women of KI. She a leader of KI's *HaMotzi* Community Guest Meals.

Frank Stern, is the Coordinator of Student Engagement and Leadership at Penn State Abington.

Alison LaLond Wyant is the founding Director of Arcadia University's Office of Social Impact and Innovation. She is working to build social and civic engagement, global service-learning programs, and Arcadia's community partnerships

Rawan Zalzal is majoring in corporate communication and minoring in art at Penn State Abington. She will graduate in 2024 .

Charletta Zeigler is the principal of a K-8 Philadelphia charter school. She is a member of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church.

Musical Artists

Ross M. Levy is a force in the Jewish music scene, playing for congregations, camps, and youth groups around the country. Ross is married to Cantor Amy E. Levy and they have two children, Aria and Yakira.

Lee Slobotkin is KI's Administrative Assistant & Digital Content Manager. He is also a Broadway performer and phenomenal vocal artist.

In Memoriam-- Barbara Granger who spoke at our MLK Day of Learning in 2021 and devoted her life to social justice.



Social Justice Committee,
Reform Congregation
Keneseth Israel



Eastern MontCo Interfaith
Coalition



Office of Social Impact and
Innovation, Arcadia
University



Office of Student
Engagement and
Leadership, PSU