

Communicate!



FEATURED ENTRY OF THE MONTH

Learn how one congregation created community during Elul

[Emanuel Stories Project #2669](#)

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The Emanuel Stories Project is a unique program with the goal of creating community. For Elul 5768, every member was invited to compose short, personal memories or stories focusing on a moment when the High Holy Days were particularly meaningful. Every day during Elul these stories were sent by e-mail, enabling congregants to do the spiritual work of Elul at the same time that they connected with other congregants through the sharing of stories.

Profoundly varied and meaningful, the stories were collected and printed in a booklet, integrated into High Holy Days sermons and have provided an ongoing reservoir in the designing of holiday and Shabbat services. They have also become a key opportunity for congregants to share their own spiritual journeys with other members, bringing congregants together in new ways. Of the experience, one congregant wrote, "This makes me feel connected and compassionate. It actually opens my heart."

During the Omer period, congregants shared stories of a moment when Jewish learning was particularly meaningful and this Elul season people shared stories about a time in their life when being part of a community really made a difference in their lives. By sharing these stories every day during Elul and the Omer period through e-mail, we both mark these periods of spiritual preparation and create community. Particularly during these difficult economic times, sharing stories has further strengthened other community efforts to create a supportive network and work for broader social change. When congregants know more about one another, they feel more connected and concerned for Temple Emanuel as a whole.

For more information about celebrating the Jewish holidays, visit the [Union for Reform Judaism's online holiday portal](#).

Also, visit [Jewels of Elul](#), a similar national project sponsored by Jewish Family Service.