Boston Workmen’s Circle is:
A community and spiritual home for secular Jewish life;
A voice for progressive Jewish values and social change;
An arts and education center celebrating
Yiddish, Jewish, and progressive culture.
Dear BWC Members,

As our program year came to a close last month, we asked our leaders to reflect on what we had accomplished together. Over the past six months, as we witnessed hatred and bigotry erupting across our country, we responded by rising up together with our allies to create a tidal wave of resistance. From a place of deep despair and outrage, we have gathered to sing and organize our way into our own vision of a besere velt, a better world. In this Annual Report, you will read about all the ways our community has come together to respond to injustice, to celebrate our culture, and to rise up together.

As a grassroots member-led organization, our people are our greatest strength. This year our people have been busy! Together we put on 175 programs attended by thousands of people ages 0-96. These programs were organized by over 100 BWC member volunteers. This year we saw unprecedented growth in the number of new leaders who stepped up to get involved and take on leadership, including one of our Shule alumni who created the Immigrant Justice & Sanctuary Working Group.

In the pages of this Annual Report, you will see highlights of our arts, culture, education, and social justice programs and campaigns. You may even discover a new program or committee you’d like to join in the year to come! We also share our funding structure as a member-led organization. You may be surprised to learn that only 11% of our revenue comes from grant funding. This means that we are 89% self-sustaining, thanks to members like you paying dues, attending holidays, classes and events, and making donations throughout the year.

We are thriving, thanks to you. The Boston Globe reported earlier this year that membership at traditional synagogues is declining, but noted that membership at alternative communities, specifically naming Boston Workmen’s Circle, is on the rise. Our membership grew by 33% last year, amplifying our impact and our collective power.

Whether you join the BWC community once a year for high holidays, or year-round for programs, rituals, concerts, meetings and marches, we are forging the path together to create the beloved community that we all envision. This year we hope to grow that community to 500 members.

Thank you for contributing your voice to this community.

With love & solidarity,

Jen Kiok
Executive Director

Riva Pearson
Board President
Co-sponsored “Challenging Islamophobia: Training of Trainers”
Hosted a Bystander Intervention training with the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) & True Story Theater
Co-sponsored “Resisting Surveillance: Community Preparedness in Post-Obama USA”
Participated in a Chain of Peace at the ISBCC, demonstrating our commitment to everyone in our community having a safe space to worship
Hosted “A Conversation about Jewish/Muslim Solidarity & Civil Liberties” with Shannon Al-Wakeel, Muslim Justice League
Participated in Chanukah Solidarity March Against Islamophobia
Hosted “No Place to Call Home: My Life as a Palestinian Refugee” discussion & book-signing event with Thaer Abdallah

“It has been deeply meaningful to strengthen my relationships with our Muslim neighbors this year as we work together to fight bigotry and show up for one other.”
- Andrew Cohen Committee Member

ACTING FOR RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Led a successful campaign to bring the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) to Brookline. Gathered over 500 petition signatures and passed Warrant Article unanimously at Town Meeting

Launched Immigrant Justice & Sanctuary Working Group. BWC voted to become a Level 2 Sanctuary congregation

Held Rapid Response Training for witnesses to ICE raids & deportations

Signed on to Safe Communities Act, and turned out members to legislative hearing in support of immigrant & Muslim communities

Mobilized BWC members and allies to support GBIO's successful affordable housing and criminal justice campaigns

Supported Cosecha and immigrants’ rights through fundraising house party & May Day actions

MIDDLE EAST WORKING GROUP

Hosted “Condition Critical: Life and Death in Palestine/Israel” discussion and book-signing with Alice Rothchild
Organized a BWC team in 2nd Annual 1for3 Walk for Water for Palestinian refugees, raising $2,500

Lobbied to protect free speech in MA, and put out a statement against an anti-BDS bill, “An Act to Prohibit Discrimination in State Contracts”
SHABES

- **Post-Election Shabes** brought together over 100 community members to connect, grieve, and take action
- **Hosted 7 Shabes gatherings this year**, including Young Adult-hosted Hootenanny, a Yiddish-hosted May Day celebration, and Shule hosted a Shabes about tzedakah

AGING IN COMMUNITY

- **Gathered the voices** of BWC’s older members to determine how our community can sustain and nourish us as we age
- **Held 7 unique events this year on topics including:** housing options as we age, health and wellness, aging challenges and opportunities, and a discussion about end-of-life choices facilitated by the Conversation Project
- **Sponsored a book reading and discussion** with Mindy Fried, author of *Caring for Red*

RITUAL

- **Hosted** high holiday services, Tu B’Shvat & Pesakh Seder
- **High holidays** brought together over 500 people from our community. This year’s d’var was delivered by Sarah Chapple-Sokol on challenging Islamophobia
- **Tu B’Shvat Seder** celebrated environmental justice
- **Our Pesakh Seder**, with over 250 people in attendance, celebrated immigrants, and our theme was “Everyone Is Welcome”
- Held a visioning session to infuse new songs and rituals into our holiday celebrations, supporting intergenerational leadership

CARING

- **We rise to create connections** across all corners of our community, from welcoming new members to being a resource for those seeking support
YIDDISH

- Hosted 41 programs this year, including:
  - Yiddish Sing
  - Yiddish Vinkls (conversation groups)
  - Svive (Young adult Yiddish gathering)
  - Yiddish trips to Aquarium & Freedom Trail
  - “Really, In Yiddish?” Modern Yiddish Culture Night
  - Yiddish May Day Shabes

- Offered two semesters of Yiddish Classes:
  - Ran two semesters of Yiddish Classes, with 4 levels and a total of 40 students.
  - Offered a new Yiddish class for LGBTQ Young Adults

CHORUS

- A Besere Velt hosted “Sing Out! Fight Back!” A Community Concert of Resistance with special guests from a Turkish ensemble

- Performed at the New Repertory Theater in Fiddler on the Roof and at the annual Cambridge Peace Commission Holocaust commemoration

- The chorus mini-ensemble performed at the Chanukah March Against Islamophobia, at a Holocaust Remembrance event at the US Department of Labor, and at Shule graduation

ADULT EDUCATION

- Circle Book Group met 10 times & read books like: Great House by Nicole Krauss & The Paris Architect by Charles Belfoure

- Adult-Educ Courses:
  - “Secular Talmud pt. II” course taught by Rabbi Mónica Gomery
  - “In the Middle: Race, Justice & The Ashkenazim” course taught by Chris Messinger
SHULE

- **Our Jewish Cultural Sunday School engages children** grades K-7 in an exploration of Jewish identity rooted in Jewish cultural literacy and traditions of social justice
- **Circle Playtime** is a monthly playgroup for children 0-4 with their parents
- **Enrolled** 73 Shule and Circle Playtime families, with 100 children in our programs
- **Taught** 22 Shule sessions throughout the year
- **Hosted three holiday celebrations:** Sukes Festival, Chanukah Party, and Purim Carnival
- **Held annual 5th grade labor protest** outside Wendy’s, supporting the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

TEENS ACTING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

- Participated in trainings on adulthood, sexism, racism, Islamophobia & anti-Semitism
- **Canvassed in New Hampshire** to get out the vote
- **Organized Shule families** to write cards of support to local mosques at Chanukah Party
- **Attended the 1for3 Walk for Water** in support of Palestinian Refugees
- **Led a bystander intervention training** for the Shule Vov class

YOUNG ADULTS

- **20 young adults planned & attended a weekend retreat** in Western MA to deepen relationships and develop new leaders
- **Hosted a Young Adult Tashlich ritual** for the first time with 30 people in attendance at the JP pond
- **Planned Summer Shabes monthly gatherings** in backyards, living rooms, and rooftops
- **Hosted the BWC Radical Chanukah Party:** made latkes & applesauce, lit a peace and justice human menorah, wrote holiday cards to local mosques
- **Gragger, our annual Purim shpil and party,** had 300 attendees this year. The theme was supporting immigrants and Cosecha’s May Day general strike
FOR THE YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 2016

REVENUE AND SUPPORT:

Support
Contributions $61,091
Grants $45,300
Membership dues $61,824

Revenue
Events revenue $108,038
Program fee revenue (Tuition) $90,843
Rental revenue $26,595
Investment income $582
Total revenue and support $394,273

EXPENSES:

Program services $228,853
Fundraising $76,125
General and administrative $139,773
Total expenses $444,751

Change in net assets ($50,478)
Net assets, beginning of year $1,570,757
Net assets, end of year $1,520,279

2016 Revenue & Support

- Events 27%
- Tuition 11%
- Membership 16%
- Contributions 16%
- Grants 11%
- Rentals 7%
Our People

BOARD
Riva Pearson, President
Marsha Lazar, Vice President
Micha Josephy, Treasurer
Laura Derman, Secretary
Sarah Chapple-Sokol
Clayton Cheever
Anne Greenwald
Jenny Hochstadt
Pauli Katz
Patty Nolan
Sarah O'Connor
Diana Parad
Dianne Perlmutter
Andy Strauss

SHULE TEACHERS
Circle Playtime: Meira Soloff
Kindergarten: Sammy Sass
Alef (1st grade): Chloe Piazza
Beyz (2nd grade): Sarah Robins
Giml (3rd grade): Pauline Katz
Daled (4th grade): Kai Rosenfield
Hey (5th grade): Mirah Sand
Vov (6th grade): Nellie Shippen
Zayin (7th grade): Megan Wolf
Music: Bob Follansbee
Hebrew: Naomi Weinblatt & Nellie Shippen

COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Jewish Muslim Relations:
Laura Derman, Sarah Chapple-Sokol
Middle East Working Group:
Stanley Habib, Karen Klein
AFREJ (GARE):
Tolle Graham, Chris Messinger
AFREJ (Immigrant Justice & Sanctuary):
Libby Shrobe
Yiddish:
Mike Katz, Lily Weitzman
Ritual:
Linda Gritz
Shabes:
Marie Ariel, Jill Edelson
Shule:
Jackie DeLisi
Chorus:
Andy Strauss, Bob Follansbee
Caring:
Diana Parad, Clayton Cheever
Book Group:
Fredi Dworkin, Shelly Dein
Aging in Community:
Dianne Perlmutter, Marsha Lazar
Young Adults:
Mirah Sand, Shira Tiffany, Sarah O’Connor
Finance:
Micha Josephy
Personnel:
Diana Parad
Building:
Jenny Silverman & Debbie Katz
Fundraising:
Micha Josephy & Ava Cheloff

“Workmen’s Circle offers me a place to act in the history of my Jewish heritage, in honor of the Yiddish-speaking union leader heroines of the early 20th century.”

- Haley Kossek, BWC Young Adult member, quoted in The Boston Globe, November 16th, 2016

If you are interested in getting involved in our programs, contact our Youth & Community Organizer Liz Krushnic: liz@circleboston.org (617) 566-6281