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Jewish Holidays Meet Social Media

*Online Synagogue Tweets Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services for 1st Time
and Video-Streams for 4th Year*

These Rabbis Encourage “Chatting” During Services

CINCINNATI (September 20, 2011) – Last year 14,000 computers were logged in to celebrate the Jewish High Holidays with the first and largest contemporary online synagogue, OurJewishCommunity.org. For the upcoming holidays this year, (Rosh Hashanah Sept. 28-29, Yom Kippur Oct. 7-8), thousands more are expected.

For the first time ever, the online congregation will also tweet the High Holiday services. Hundreds of tweets will be sent out from the Twitter accounts of the online congregation (@JewsOnline) and one of its rabbis, Laura Baum (@rabbi), during the evening and morning services. The tweets come from the liturgy that is used during the services, which can also be downloaded as a PDF in its complete form.

OurJewishCommunity.org is a global outreach initiative of Congregation Beth Adam in Cincinnati, Ohio. Over its 30 year history, Beth Adam has written liturgy for the Jewish holidays that expresses a contemporary and modern Jewish experience. The liturgy gives voice to Judaism’s ever-unfolding religious experience and promotes the values of intellectual honesty, open inquiry, and human responsibility. Rabbi Baum expressed, “Our liturgy is meant to be thought-provoking and accessible. What could make it more accessible than tweeting it?”

Thousands of computers and mobile devices (iPhones, iPads, Blackberries, Droids) will log in to services. Rabbi Robert Barr, one of the rabbis of OurJewishCommunity.org, said “We know that people often can’t go to a local synagogue for any one of several reasons. They may be geographically isolated, not able to afford synagogue membership, or unable to leave work or other responsibilities to go to services. Or they may find their local synagogue is more traditional than they would like. What we do is bring contemporary Judaism to people wherever they are.” During those services, which are videostreamed live and archived through Livestream, participants are encouraged to use the Facebook, Twitter, and Livestream chat features on the side of the screen to engage in conversation with each other.

Rabbi Laura Baum explained “We’re rabbis who actually encourage people to talk during our sermons. We want those attending our services online to chat with each other using social media. It’s great to see people engaging in conversation and sharing their own ideas.”



OurJewishCommunity.org, founded by Rabbi Robert Barr and Rabbi Laura Baum, will be video-streaming two Rosh Hashanah and two Yom Kippur services live. In addition, there are holiday services for children; those will be pre-recorded and include stories and age-appropriate background about the holidays. There will also be a pre-recorded Memorial Service featuring photos that the web site's members' submit of deceased family members that they are remembering. All of the services will also be archived for future viewing on the computer (although archives are not available on mobile devices).

The services will be live-streamed at www.Facebook.com/OurJewishCommunity in addition to at www.OurJewishCommunity.org with Facebook and Twitter chats. Mobile devices can access the live services at www.MobileJudaism.com or through the Livestream app for iPhones.

Dates/Times:

Wednesday, September 28, 2011 at 8:15 PM ET (Rosh Hashanah Evening)

Thursday, September 29, 2011 at 10:30 AM ET (Rosh Hashanah Morning)

Thursday, September 29, 2011 at 1:30 PM ET (Rosh Hashanah Children's)

Friday, October 7, 2011 at 8:15 PM ET (Yom Kippur Evening)

Saturday, October 8, 2011 at 10:30 AM ET (Yom Kippur Morning)

Saturday, October 8, 2011 at 1:30 PM ET (Yom Kippur Children's)

Saturday, October 8, 2011 at 4:00 PM ET (Yom Kippur Memorial)

OurJewishCommunity.org also streams a weekly Shabbat service and offers several other features: blogs, podcasts, video-casts, educational materials, holiday cards, access to rabbis, recipes, conversations, and more. Many people see OurJewishCommunity.org as their synagogue and Rabbis Barr and Baum as their rabbis.

To join the free community and view any of the services, visit

www.OurJewishCommunity.org or www.Facebook.com/OurJewishCommunity.

About OurJewishCommunity.org

OurJewishCommunity.org is the world's first progressive online synagogue. Launched on September 1, 2008, OurJewishCommunity.org has reached more than 200,000 individuals in all 50 states in the U.S. and in more than 150 countries. The online community features blogs, audio podcasts through iTunes, video podcasts through YouTube, streaming holiday services, discussion boards, holiday eCards, recipes, educational materials for all ages, and more. We have more than 3,000 followers on Twitter (www.twitter.com/JewsOnline and www.twitter.com/Rabbi) and OurJewishCommunity.org has over 8,000 Facebook fans (www.facebook.com/ourjewishcommunity).



Laura Baum, Rabbi, OurJewishCommunity.org



As the Founding Rabbi of OurJewishCommunity.org, Rabbi Laura Baum works to engage Jews through social media and other technology. Baum was named one of the 50 most influential female rabbis by the Jewish Forward and has been featured in the New York Times, CNN.com, and the Jerusalem Post. “Baum’s Blog” is a central feature of OurJewishCommunity.org as are Rabbi Baum’s YouTube podcasts. An expert on social media and the changing needs of the Jewish community, Rabbi Baum has created a new model for engaging those seeking a new way to connect to Judaism.

Rabbi Baum was ordained by Hebrew Union College in 2008 and is now an adjunct instructor there. She graduated from Yale University in 2001 Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa, and with distinction in the Psychology major. She will receive an M.B.A. from Xavier University this spring.

Robert B. Barr, Rabbi, OurJewishCommunity.org



Rabbi Robert B. Barr, ordained by Hebrew Union College in 1981, is the Founding Rabbi of Congregation Beth Adam in Cincinnati, Ohio. Under his leadership for the last 30 years, Beth Adam has grown from 6 members to over 300. The congregation has a significant voice and is a resource for liberal Jews worldwide. Rabbi Barr first imagined the online congregation and has played a continuing role in its development, including his weekly podcasts (“Barr’s Banter”) which are available on iTunes.

Rabbi Barr is active in the leadership of many Jewish organizations and has twice served as president of the Greater Cincinnati Board of Rabbis. Recognized by his peers as a leader in the evolution of modern, liberal Judaism, his writings have been published in journals, books, and web sites around the world.

High Resolution Photos available at: <http://bit.ly/ojcpres>