

with improvements they made to the building.

Members have painted the synagogue, installed lights on a timer, and added a playground. Inside, they've added a kitchen, upgraded the *mehitza* (divider separating men and women in the sanctuary), and cleaned out 40 years of trash.

Then the membership decided a preschool was needed. "Maplewood doesn't have a Jewish preschool, and we felt it would help grow the synagogue," explained Frumie Bogomilsky.



Frumie Bogomilsky: A Jewish preschool would strengthen the synagogue.

Since the synagogue is too small to house such a facility, the Bogomilskys decided to convert the former dentist's office attached to their Parker Avenue home into a school. Not everyone embraced the idea, and neighbors voiced their opposition at a Zoning Board of Adjustment hearing, but the Bogomilskys prevailed. They won the variance in November and will open their preschool in the fall of 2003.

Marmour is thrilled. "There are plenty of church preschools in Maplewood. I like the idea of having a Jewish preschool around the corner."

The Bogomilskys are pleased with their progress. "It's very nice so far, baruch Hashem," the rabbi said. The synagogue's membership has grown this year from 20 to 30. "That's a 50 percent increase," said Bauml. "Any organization with a 50 percent increase must be doing something right."

Special events are drawing crowds. One hundred people came to a summer barbecue, according to Frumie Bogomilsky, and almost as many attended a recent Hanukka party. They're not unaffiliated, she noted. Some members of other shuls, but they "come to good events all according to Jewish law," she said. "The answer 'Amen.' Is this acceptable? Kaddish but no one is there to recite it. We want to have seven prayer houses, everyone says

larly.

She likes the idea of creating a Jewish community in Maplewood. "There are a lot of Jews in Maplewood.... I like to see people walking to shul on Saturday. I like that feeling."

So do the Bogomilskys, who have a vision for the town. "We want to make a very nice, more religious Jewish community," Rabbi Bogomilsky said.

More religious Jews have come to look at Maplewood, but most buy houses elsewhere. Allie Rimer and David Stokar were drawn by the character of Maplewood's houses and the inviting downtown commercial district. They even met with the Bogomilskys. "Come and be *halutzim* [pioneers]," Allie recalled the rabbi saying to them. But they settled in Highland Park instead. "I need an *eruv*, a shul. We didn't want to be *halutzim*," she said. (An *eruv* is a boundary that allows observant people to carry objects and push carriages outside their homes on Shabbat, actions otherwise prohibited.)

Today, the Bogomilskys might have a different response for people looking for an *eruv*. In the last few weeks, recounted the rabbi, eight or nine people have suggested that he install an *eruv* in the town.

The idea took the Bogomilskys by surprise. "I didn't think people were sitting at home on Shabbos in Maplewood for lack of an *eruv*," said Frumie Bogomilsky.

"I got stopped in the strangest places," Sholom Bogomilsky said. "Even the post office." He recalled, "I asked them, 'Are you *shomer Shabbos* [Sabbath observant]?' 'No,' they responded, 'but I'd feel much more comfortable.' Or, 'When my children come to visit, they'd feel much more comfortable.' Or even, 'It will bring more religious Jews, and that will raise our real estate values.' Everyone has an interest," he said. They are investigating the idea and have set up a meeting with an expert in Tenafly, where the issue ignited passions recently.

Although many people in Maplewood welcome the idea, some did raise concerns.

"An *eruv* would be good for the town," said Allison Ziefert, village manager, Maplewood Village Alliance, and a member of Oheb Shalom. "It would add another dimension to the Jewish community and attract young professionals who need to live close to [New York]," she added. "Maplewood strives to be a town that appeals to different people at different economic levels."

But Brian McNamara, who was murdered on the frozen river near our mother, whom we found know if we should bury this flesh left behind in the attic. We want to or not it was our father whom we

they might feel pressure to become more observant. "I don't want people yelling at me for driving on Shabbat," said one. Others raise concerns about the insularity that they associate with a more religious Jewish community as well as its impact on the public school system.

Ziefert does not believe an *eruv* would engender the kind of controversy in Maplewood that it did in Tenafly. "Maplewood is very accepting and prides itself on diversity. It would be a strengthening factor for the town, as in West Orange."

Susan Palmaffy, a Realtor at Burgdorff Realtors in Maplewood who has been in the community for 30 years, said she has never had anyone ask her if there is an *eruv* in Maplewood. She believes that having an *eruv* "won't affect real estate one way or another."

Once the Bogomilskys have finished gathering information on establishing an *eruv*, they plan to open the discussion to the entire community, in part because they believe the cost will exceed what Beth Ephraim alone can handle.

"We're really shooting in the dark now," said the rabbi. "If the community is really interested, we'll do it. But if there's no interest, we won't do it. I'm hoping the interest stays and grows."

An *eruv* could certainly bring in more young religious families, according to Marlene Ginsberg, who specializes in Jewish relocation at Coldwell Banker in Parsippany. And that would help transform Beth Ephraim into the vibrant congregation Bauml envisions.

In the meantime, Frumie Bogomilsky is working on the preschool, the rabbi is planning classes in worship and Torah for



Bauml: The future of Beth Ephraim rests on attracting young families.

the fall... Bauml is busy inviting... reading ritual purity. The names rounded. I was asked 13 questions after having been severely After the pogrom, recuperating From chapter 25