

# TEENS TEAR DOWN WALLS

*(It's not what you may think!)*

If you heard that a group of teens was tearing down walls, what image pops to mind?

Not many people would picture a diverse, spiritual, open-minded, energetic, guitar-playing, laughter-filled, interfaith group learning about each others' faiths!

A group of teens and youth leaders from Hope Presbyterian Church, New Direction Church, and Temple Israel came together on a recent Friday night to "tear down the walls" of bias and prejudice and to learn about each others' faiths and backgrounds.

The inspiration for their gathering was a recent concert event entitled *Tear Down the Walls* at Hope Presbyterian, led by highly acclaimed Jewish recording star Rick Recht.

"The teens there were moved into action," said Celia Mutchnick, Youth Director at Temple Israel. "At the concert, they came to understand that it takes an active, ongoing effort to learn about people who come from backgrounds different than your own. These teens appreciate how important it is to continue dialogue to truly gain perspective on others' beliefs."

Celia continued, "These energetic teens came together to experience Shabbat and Passover with MeFTY, Temple Israel's youth group. They ate great Passover-friendly foods, including matzah pizza, macarons, fruits, veggies, and sweets, talked about the meaning of Passover and Shabbat, watched a movie, and had an impromptu and enthusiastic song session led by members of the Temple Israel Teen Team and singers from Hope and New Direction."

"Their willingness to learn about each other was extremely uplifting, gratifying, and encouraging. They know that by understanding our differences and similarities, our mutual respect grows." Celia concluded, "Perhaps most importantly, it says that young people of varying backgrounds and experiences want to be engaged in helping to make our community better."

While learning about other faiths may not be a typical way for a group of teens to spend a Friday night, this forward-thinking group will meet again and continue to tear down walls.

