

## Tradition prevails

# Rabbi eyes new temple for ultra-orthodox sect

By Mary Lou Callaway  
special writer

Rabbi Mallech Silberberg, the bearded religious leader of a West Bloomfield, ultra-orthodox sect, hopes to build a synagogue on Maple Road.

"Some of our members walk as much as 2 1/2 miles to services," says Silberberg, explaining that that's just one of the strict laws his congregation observes on the Sabbath.

The rabbi apologizes for not shaking hands with a woman, another of their regulations.

Congregation Bais Chabad will serve about 35 families who live in the immediate neighborhood. The proposed one-story, 2,600-square-foot temple on less than an acre of land is zoned single-family residential.

Special-use approval is needed before the temple can be built. The township planning commission set July 14 for a public hearing on the matter.

Township assistant planning director Thomas Bird sees no problem with granting approval. "The only concern is the activity."

SERVICES WILL be on Saturday and Sunday along with study classes of five to 15 persons, the rabbi says.

If approval is voted, the synagogue will be required to abide by the same

parking, landscaping, bicycle path and wall requirements as any other building in town, says Bird.

Future activity is also the concern of Cecil Bauer, a Woodcrest North subdivision homeowner adjacent to the proposed temple.

His subdivision is bounded by commercial development and a swim club. Bauer fears the new synagogue's activities might further encroach on their neighborhood.

Silberberg, interviewed at the Lubavitch Center in Farmington Hills, says his sect is a branch of the Chassidic movement founded in Russia 250 years ago.

"It's an outreach program for Jews worldwide. Every major university has a Lubavitch Center," he adds.

The rabbi teaches West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills students afternoons at the center. Services are now at West Bloomfield's Ely Elementary School for the most rigid adherents to Judaism.

"WE LIVE BY THE Torah. A Jew is a Jew," says Silberberg.

They don't recognize differences in orthodox, conservative or reform Jews.

"I am personally more strict than the orthodox Jew," says the rabbi, who may never cut his beard according to the sect's laws.

The congregation must walk to services where men and women sit separately. On the Sabbath or holidays there are some 39 activities they may not indulge in. Among these are driving, watching television, writing or cooking.

They were unable to vote in the recent June school election because it fell on a holiday.

"We have never deviated from God's laws in 3,300 years," says Silberberg. But members need not commit to all the strict tenets, he adds.

Member Arie Leibovitch spoke to the planning commission on behalf of the rabbi because the meeting day was a Jewish holiday.

"We've owned the property the past four years. Basically, it will be a study center. It has not quite captured the enthusiasm of the Jewish community," said Leibovitch.

That is an understatement," commented planning commissioner and township board member Raymond Holland.

Rabbi Silberberg has lived in West Bloomfield for six years since leaving the Bronx in New York. He has a wife and four children. They are expecting their fifth child.

If the planning commission approves the group's special use permit, the building could be ready by the September High Holy Days, Leibovitch says.



DWIGHT CENDROWSKI/staff photographer

Rabbi Mallech Silberberg hopes to build a new temple in West Bloomfield.

## Michigan seeking top senior citizen

The search is on for the most outstanding senior citizens in the state. The state Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) and the Michigan State Fair are looking for outstanding senior citizens who, through contributions made to their communities, merit the title of Senior Citizen of the Year.

The awards, one for leadership and one for service, will be presented at Senior Citizens Day at the State Fair on Aug. 31. Applications are currently being taken by the state office and will be accepted up through Aug. 7.

For more information or an applica-

tion, contact the area Agency on Aging nearest you or write OSA, P.O. Box 3006, Lansing 48909.

Kenneth Oettle, director of OSA, says this marks the sixth year his office and the State Fair have joined forces to recognize outstanding older Michigani-

ans. "Each year the number of applicants increases and the job of selecting those most qualified becomes substantially difficult. This state has just a wealth of talented, dedicated and civic-minded older people."

Nominees for the awards will be

judged on activities over the past year, but that involvement in service and leadership roles over a number of years will be taken into consideration.

Anyone age 60 or older is eligible to receive the award. Only organizations may submit nominations.

## Scholarship is awarded

Audine Schwartz of Farmington, a senior at North Farmington High School, has been awarded a \$500 Merit Scholarship from Madonna College in Livonia for the fall 1981 term.

Merit Scholarships are based on academic excellence. Miss Schwartz maintained a 3.7 grade point average on a

4.0 scale while in high school.

The daughter of Arthur and Dolores Schwartz, Miss Schwartz plans to earn a bachelor of applied arts degree in the Learning Disabilities program at Madonna College.

She is one of 11 recipients to win the award.

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