

From the Rabbi's Desk

November 2019

Friends,

The High Holy Days, Sukkot and Simchat Torah are in our rear view mirror. They were all fabulous. There are too many people to thank individually in this article. If you contributed in some way, big or small, know that I and the congregation are so grateful for your contributions. Often after services I heard words of thanks or have received notes of thanks in the mail commenting on how meaningful services are at Temple Emanu-El. I always take these as a thank you to the entire congregation. I could not do any of what I do without the support of my colleagues, Sherry Barnes and Roberta Reisner-Winograd, so many volunteers, and you. I cannot understate how much this is a community effort. I am grateful for everyone's contributions.

Now we are heading into the Hebrew month of Cheshvan. It is a quiet time with no holidays. For the next month, perhaps we can kick back a while and dream of latkes with sour cream, apple sauce, or, as Sherry prefers, with ketchup. But don't relax too much; things are not really all that quiet. There is always something going on at our Temple. Read further into this bulletin for information about the many ways to get involved. There are education courses, Brotherhood and Sisterhood events, and of course dinners, services and onegs.

There are a couple of items that deserve special mention. November 15-17, Rabbi Or Zohar and Feliza Bascara-Zohar, our friends from the Galilee in Israel, will be returning. Many of you remember the wonderful weekend we had with them last fall. The spiritual energy of their music has stayed with us on Friday nights. Or and Feliza made an indelible mark upon our hearts and Sherry and I look forward to sharing their energy with an even bigger audience this fall. As publicity is rolling out in the coming weeks, we will be inviting the entire liberal Jewish community to join with us for another breath of fresh AiR. In addition, there will be an interfaith component to this program. Or and Feliza's return is partly funded by a grant from the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. The IMPJ has great interest in worldwide interfaith outreach and is funding two trips this year for Or and Feliza to visit Temple Emanu-El. Just as we must always look for opportunities for bringing our Jewish community together, we must also strengthen ties and build bridges with other faith communities. Or and Feliza are experienced bridge builders in Israel and I know they can inspire us to do the same here. For the Artist in Residence program this year, we are partnering with All Souls Unitarian Universalist Congregation in New London. Many of you know that All Souls is a vibrant spiritual home and powerful voice for social action in New London. Our history is also tied to theirs.

They were an incubator for Temple Emanu-El when we were in our infancy almost sixty years ago. This is a tremendous opportunity for us to strengthen ties beyond our walls. Please keep your calendar open for the weekend of November 15-17. They will return again in January.

I also want to mention that I am working with our president, Jonathan Rowe, and our board of trustees to begin a series of community conversations. The board has information that it will want to convey to you about opportunities to work cooperatively with Beth El and the Federation. We know that you must have questions and concerns. We want to hear what you are concerned and respond to your concerns. I want to hear what you want from your Temple. Our building is only a small part of who we are as a congregation. Temple Emanu-El is a center for learning, spirituality, community services, social action and much more. But we need to understand what makes Emanu-El meaningful for you. As a small congregation with limited resources, we must focus our efforts carefully. The best way for us to understand what is important to you is through face to face conversation. We will hold these meetings out in the community so there should be a meeting near you. Please make it a priority to attend. We need to hear your voice. The future of Temple Emanu-El depends upon us being able to listen and respond to community needs. I hope you will take the time to join in one of the meetings. Please keep a look out for places, dates and times.

L'shanah Tovah,

Rabbi Marc