

# From the Rabbi's Desk

March 2020

Friends,

One can often work for years without any substantial confirmation that what we are doing is heading in the right direction or that the things we are doing are really effective. Often the time from first creating a vision until the vision bears fruit is measured in years, if not a lifetime. The purpose was to explore what you want the congregation to be. A common theme expressed was that we ought to be reaching outside Temple Emanu-El to build relationships.

We have worked very hard at Temple Emanu-El to build relationships within the Jewish community. For all the high profile fits and starts that have been frustrating to many, I believe there are many examples of the liberal Jewish congregations in our area working together very well. Because of the commitment of the rabbis and lay leaders, we have had engaging and joyous community programs for Shavuot and Simchat Torah for several years now. This spring we are going to add Purim to the list of congregational collaborative events. But for Reform Judaism, it is not enough just to be thinking inside the Jewish community. Reform Judaism has always been concerned not only with Judaism for the sake of Jews, but Judaism for the sake of the world. Reform Jews have always aimed to do tikkun olam, repair of the world. In order to repair the world, we need good partners, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Last year we reached across the world make connections with Reform Jews in Israel. Many of you will remember that back in November, Rabbi Or and Feliza Zohar were here for their second Artist in Residence weekend at Temple Emanu-El. This November's weekend we wanted to do even more bridge building. In faith based work, good friends make good partners, and good partners make good friends. When I thought of building bridges outside of Temple Emanu-El, I immediately thought of my friend Carolyn Patierno, Pastor at All Souls UU Congregation in New London. We partnered with All Souls to do truly ground breaking interfaith work. We called it Building Beloved Community. The crescendo of our musical artist in residence weekend was an interfaith Sunday morning service at Temple Emanu-El. The combined Temple Emanu-El – All Souls Choir lifted our roof. Our success reverberated even in Israel. Rabbi Gilad Kariv, Executive Director of the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism praised our work at the URJ Biennial in Chicago because we not only built a bridge to Israel, but connected it outside the Jewish community here. The vision expressed by Isaiah, for us to be a light to the nations, has bore fruit.

In the not too distant future, as we celebrate our 60th year, we will have a full house at 29 Dayton Road. God willing, we will soon be able to work out a way for Beth El to rent space in our building in a way that benefits both congregations. In the fall, All Souls will also be renting space from us while they renovate and enlarge their building. We will be returning the kindness that All Souls extended to us almost 60 years ago when we were just starting out. My hope is that we take every opportunity to strengthen the bridges we have built. If we do, then our light will shine even more brightly. This light is desperately needed in our broken world.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Marc