

Presidential Message

November 2020

Shalom Chaverim,

The days are getting shorter, and the spiritual, holiday-packed month of Tishrei is behind us. While we all wish we could have been together in our beautiful sanctuary, I think we can all agree that Rabbi Marc and Cantorial Soloist Sherry Barnes did a phenomenal job in making our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services just as meaningful as ever. Special thanks also goes out to organist Leslie Merwin, who accompanied Sherry so beautifully; Jose Cordero for his shofar skills and the fanfare that he composed especially for Temple Emanu-El; Carly Fleming for her beautiful cello rendition of Kol Nidre; Lisa Gilbert, Adam Kaufman, and Amanda Rowe for their behind the scenes technical support; and to all who chanted Torah, did readings, or otherwise contributed to our High Holy Days services. In addition, Rabbi Marc and Sherry partnered with the clergy of the other 4 "liberal" congregations of southeastern Connecticut to create a creative Simchat Torah/Shemini Atzeret program and services that were well-attended and enthusiastically received.

In other news, the COVID-19 Task Force met in early October and made the difficult, but sound, decision to continue the suspension of all in-person Temple Emanu-El activities until at least spring 2021. While this is not what any of us want to hear, it is the only responsible decision, given our increasing COVID-19 numbers in New London County (which is the state "hot spot" as of this writing). Community spread is occurring here in New London County and nationwide, and contact tracing has shown that most of the spread is due to small gatherings of family and friends, in settings where people tend to feel "safe". Most scientists are anticipating a very difficult winter, with COVID-19 numbers likely to further increase as cold weather makes outdoor activities prohibitive, and gatherings for Thanksgiving, Chanukah, and Christmas are likely to further compound the issue.

However, Temple Emanu-El has a full slate of activities, including services, classes, and social opportunities available virtually. If you have an idea for a program or activity that you would like to see happen, please contact me, or our clergy and share your ideas! In addition, board members will be calling congregants over the upcoming weeks to check in, and to determine whether there are any barriers to full participation in Temple Emanu-El life. If you are struggling to engage due to lack of Zoom proficiency, trouble obtaining a device with which to connect, or any other reason, please let us know so that we can assist.

Finally, I know I said this last month, but it bears repeating. When you read this, it will likely be on or near Election Day. Please make sure that your voice and your values are counted by voting on November 3rd (if you haven't already dropped your absentee ballot into a ballot box, as I did). The future of our nation depends on a fair election process, which reflects the free expression of the will of the people. So get out there !

Jo-el Fernandez