

Presidential Message

April 2021

Chag sameach!

Passover is here! And while some of us may be hosting small family gatherings, many of us will be conducting Zoom gatherings for the 2nd year. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 Task Force/Re-Entry Committee has been hard at work making plans for a gradual return to some in-person activities, while maintaining a strong virtual presence.

At the last Re-Entry meeting, we developed specific guidelines to hold small b'nai mitzvot ceremonies in the sanctuary, with the clergy and up to 20 members of the student's family present and the rest of the mishpacha on Zoom. The guidance includes specific directives around physical distancing by household units, singing, masking, etc. During our next meeting, we will be focused on resuming some other in-person activities in a safe manner, likely beginning with outdoor activities. The committee also has a goal of returning to in-person Religious School in the fall of 2021. Thanks to Sean Bendick and his research, we have also determined what equipment we will need in order to maintain a strong virtual presence once we return to in-person services. And while Sean presented this to the board at the March board meeting, John Murphy stepped up with an offer to contribute towards this project! Thanks to you for making this happen.

Speaking of Sean Bendick-----he has been selected as the recipient of this year's Howard Ilson award! I cannot think of a more deserving candidate. Sean served 4 years as president, has continued to contribute his time and talents to our congregation and has been exceedingly helpful to me while I transitioned into my presidency. Mazel tov, Sean!

In Community Campus news, the architects have developed a beautiful rendering for the potential campus and the board has determined that the time is right to call a special congregational meeting so that everyone's voices may be heard on this topic. As such, a congregational meeting will be held on **Sunday, April 18th at 1:00 via Zoom**. Watch your e-mail and snail mail for registration information and a Zoom link. The committee hopes that this project will bring new vitality to the Jewish community in eastern Connecticut and will rejuvenate the existing Temple Emanu-El facility to new design standards. Please come (virtually) on the 18th to hear more about it and have your questions answered. I have stepped down from the Community Campus committee so that I may better fulfill my responsibilities to my employer, my significant other and family, and to my other duties as your president. However, I have divested my voting authority on the Community Campus committee to our president-elect Andy Parad, who is extremely competent and capable. Andy, along with Gail Weber, the Community Campus committee chairperson, will take the lead at our congregational meeting in ensuring that everyone's questions and comments are heard and addressed.

Meanwhile, the ad hoc Vision Committee, led by Rabbi Ekstrand, is in the final stages of developing a vision statement that reflects the values of our congregation. By the time you read this, it will likely be complete. Watch for it in this space next month.

Happy Spring! And please get your vaccine, as by the time you read this, ALL Connecticut residents should be eligible to sign up!

L'shalom,

Jo-el Fernandez