



Message from President Ziva Raney
2/16/2021

Shalom friends.

I hope this message finds you warm, healthy and happy.

While we are early in a new calendar year, 2021, we have officially passed the middle of our congregational fiscal year. This has been a very difficult time, particularly these last few months. There has been heartache, illness, suffering, tension, stress, and uncertainty for so many of us. Without the ability to physically be together, our hearts have come together on many occasions to share in the joys and sorrows of each other. That is the beauty of this congregation.

Many, many months ago, at the annual meeting in June, I committed to all of you that the leadership of JRC would be carefully monitoring the impact of the pandemic on the many aspects of our community.

In the spring we engaged a health advisory team that has proven to be incredibly valuable to Emily, Rabbi and me as we have navigated the development of this pandemic. We are so blessed to have highly respected professionals in the fields of immunology, public health and epidemiology in our community. Toward the end of 2020, I appointed a Re-opening Task Force, chaired by Gale Adland, to develop the protocols and recommendations necessary to be able to re-open our building. Those recommendations are being reviewed and will guide our decisions as we move forward toward more hopeful times.

An important aspect of any opportunity to be together and eventually to be in our building is tied to the success of widespread vaccination for COVID-19, for your protection and for all of us. I know many of you have already had the opportunity to begin your vaccine process. *Mazel Tov!* I have heard from several people how powerful it is to say the “*shehechayanu*” upon receiving the first vaccine. We encourage each of you to find your spot and get your shot. If you are not sure where or how to find this information, check our website and Facebook page for links to resources.

Clearly, we have our eye on re-opening the building and can't wait until that time when it will be safe to be together again. I want each of you to be confident when the time comes ... that we will only open the building when it is safe. We will not rush, we will do it wisely and carefully.

So yes, our building remains closed for the foreseeable future to protect the health of our members, staff, and clergy. But Judea Reform is open and thriving. Our committees and our amazing staff are working so hard to bring you educational, social, and artistic programs. And our worship is deeply personal and meaningful each week thanks to our rabbi, Zemer/Dr. Allan Friedman, our talented volunteer cantor corps, and key “behind-the-scenes” volunteers.

Purim is around the corner and I think we are **all** anxiously anticipating the creative genius that our talented congregants will bring into our homes. I hope you saw the special Purim section in last week's eNotices. Our celebration of Purim this year has several learning opportunities including a reading by, & conversation with Rabbi Leah Berkowitz with her brand new book “Queen Vashti's Comfy Pants”; there are other offerings from our Adult Education committee. Check

your email and our website for details including an opportunity to come by the synagogue for *mishloach manot*, a gift of *hamentashen*.

Our amazing professionals are carefully monitoring the finances of our congregation, as they always do, and our finance committee remains committed to carefully tracking the budget. While income is down this year, our expenses are also down and we anticipate finishing the year in a solid financial position, even with some continued uncertainty. I want to thank those who have continued to give and support our congregation through your membership support and other gifts, including the annual appeal, allowing us to continue to serve all of our members, regardless of financial capacity and enabling us not to just survive through this pandemic, but to thrive. We want to come out on the other side stronger and ready to reach our next goals. Special thanks to Carrie Norry, Vice President and Chair of our development committee, for the inaugural issue of the Tzedakah Times sent earlier this month. This is such a lovely way to recognize the generosity of our supporters.

One of the big projects our leadership is working on right now, is the plan to make necessary repairs and improvements to our sacred space. One aspect of that is the repair of the Prosnitz Patio and shoring up the foundation beneath it and our sanctuary. Our building & grounds committee, led by Mark Hainline has been really busy. As this is a major undertaking, our treasurer, Shawn dos Santos and the finance committee are researching the most responsible way to fund this repair, including the possibility of taking a loan. Another project is the replacement of HVAC units to ensure our airflow and filtration are at their best. As you may know, the HVAC units are original to the construction of our synagogue and we have kept them performing well, long past their anticipated shelf life.

One of the priorities of JRC for several years has been the commitment to add a second rabbi to serve our members. While we had hoped to begin a search process this year, we promised to do so only if circumstances permitted us to. Given the economic uncertainty of these challenging times, the current focus of our time and energy, the leadership did not feel it prudent to begin that search at this time. That said, Rabbi Soffer and the board are hard at work at defining a plan to ensure that the needs of our members are met by clergy in the coming year and for years to come. We will always pursue the right path for JRC.

These are topics that will directly impact the budget for 2021-22, which is in the early stages of development, as I speak. As we do each year, we will have an opportunity for you to gather (virtually) to ask your budget questions prior to the annual meeting. Speaking of which, we are already thinking about the annual meeting scheduled for **May 23** and how we can top last year.

Until next time, please stay safe and healthy. Connect with us for worship or programs. And stay in touch! *I miss seeing you!* We are stronger because you are part of Judea Reform!

Chazak chazak v'nitchazek.

Be strong, be strong, together we are stronger.