



April 3, 2020/ 5780

Dear Friends,

It feels surreal to be writing this email during these unprecedented times. We are all adjusting to significant changes in our daily routines, dealing with uncertainty, concern for loved ones, caring for family members, and facing many emotions including fear and loss.

Even in this unusual time, Judea Reform Congregation continues to be a beacon of strength for our community. **You are not alone; we are in this together.** Our professional staff is working tirelessly, in partnership with our Board, to be a source of comfort and hope for you, your family and our larger community. We are so blessed to be led by Rabbi Soffer who is creating and recreating ritual and engagement experiences in the most authentic ways possible, including powerful ways to “come together” in mourning and worship. As Rabbi Soffer reminds us, we are physically, not socially, distancing. We are finding ways to live Jewishly together in this time of global crisis. I hope you will join us to welcome Shabbat each Friday (6:00pm) evening at our [virtual services](#).

We continue to develop innovative ways to engage including meaningful worship, content rich religious school and vibrant sing-a-longs. Volunteers, board members and staff members are making calls to all of our members and regularly checking in with our most vulnerable. If you are struggling or need support, please reach out to me at President@judeareform.org or our Caring Community Committee at CaringCommunity@judeareform.org.

The decisions we make for Judea Reform Congregation are informed by Governor Cooper and Mayor Schewel’s Shelter in Place rulings, along with CDC guidelines. At this point, **we do not expect to be back in our building before June** (and we are monitoring the situation daily). This brings many questions and not surprisingly, **we do not have all of the answers.** But we remain committed to continuing to lead our congregation through these turbulent times.

Here are few topics I am eager to share with you:

Executive Director of Judea Reform Congregation: In the midst of these really difficult times, I have some good news. I am thrilled to announce that, upon recommendation from the Executive Director Search Committee and the Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees has offered Emily Young the full time “settled” position of Executive Director of Judea Reform Congregation. Emily is uniquely qualified to serve our congregation given her depth of knowledge of our community, our members and now our operations, having been in the role of Interim Executive Director since September, 2018. Emily’s demonstrated success and our commitment to continuity, combined with the incredible way she is leading through this crisis, makes her the right choice for our Executive Director of Judea Reform Congregation. Please join

me in thanking Emily for her amazing work and congratulating her on this formal appointment.

Financial Plans: We are in the process of assessing the financial impact of our building closure on our budget. The good news is that Judea Reform is in a good financial position to be thoughtful and responsible in our approach to the decisions that need to be made. Driven by our values, the leadership is committed to take care of our community and support our Rabbi and our staff. Liz Gibbons, our Business Manager, and Emily Young are working with our Treasurer to reforecast through the end of the fiscal year. Our goal is to continue to live our mission, vision, and values through these challenging times.

The thoughtful leaders on our Finance Committee are working closely with Liz and Emily to leverage the resources available to nonprofit organizations and faith-based institutions at this time, in particular through the recently adopted CARES Act. Our staff are working hard in this remote environment, and we are committed to continue to pay them.

Based on the recommendations of our Finance Committee, Executive Committee and our professional staff, we are pausing development of the budget for FY21 to focus on the critical needs of our congregation now. We are beginning to look at short-, medium-, and long-term implications and considering both best case and worst case scenarios to ensure we are prepared in any situation. In the coming weeks, we will do our best to re-start the budget process for next year, based on this analysis.

We recognize the economic uncertainty ahead for our country and all of us. Please know that we are here for you and want each and every one of you to be part of our community now and in the future. Judea Reform remains committed to ensure that finances are not a barrier to engagement and membership.

Judea Reform Annual Meeting and Cemetery Corporation Meeting: We are looking into the various options that might be available to us in May, including the possibility of a virtual annual meeting. There are legal considerations about how we can conduct a vote and we have excellent legal minds (our past Presidents) who are looking into this for us. Stay tuned. Unfortunately, this also means we will need to rethink how we celebrate our incredible volunteers -- who are the essence of Judea Reform.

Passover: Many of us are thinking about ways to honor the tradition of Passover in our homes. I had plans to host my parents in Durham for our seder but now we are planning for a virtual seder, which means both of my sisters' families will join us, too. We will carry on the tradition of telling our story, of honoring the past and strengthening our commitment to justice in our world. I encourage you to draw on the myriad resources from Rabbi Soffer and Allan Friedman, including Rabbi Soffer's "how-to session on leading an online seder" and Seder Kits full of resources from URJ, PJ Library, and others. You can find them all [here](#).

On a personal note, this community is helping my family feel secure and embraced in love. Judea Reform is continuing the spiritual and social connection we have become accustomed to, albeit virtually for now, and every one of you is critical to our community. During my nearly 2 years as President, I have seen this congregation demonstrate incredible resilience. And I know that we will get through this together.

To all of you on the frontlines of this crisis - our health care providers, first responders, journalists, government workers, scientists, teachers, and others - we pray especially for your continued good health and well-being.

Sending each of you and your families, good health, peace of mind, joy and a meaningful Passover.

Chazak, chazak V'nitchazek,
Be strong, be strong, together we are stronger.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ziva Starr Raney
President, Judea Reform Congregation