

A Letter from Rabbi Laurie



Dear Friends,

I've been involved with this incredible congregation since I was an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin-

Madison. Since the very beginning, I felt drawn to the congregation's commitment to be inclusive and welcoming, develop meaningful Jewish ritual, and educate children who can embrace Judaism on their own terms.

I decided to go to rabbinical school because of my experiences at Shaarei Shamayim. I wanted to work in a congregation like ours, where members have fostered a creative, warm atmosphere. After 16 years, I consider myself lucky to serve this community.

Over these 16 years, we've:

- More than **doubled our households** – from 70 to 165;
- Partnered with the **beautiful First Unitarian Society** in the sharing of ritual space;
- Created **ten lively havurot** (fellowship groups) so that our members can connect with others of a similar demographic or who have similar interests;
- Developed a **thriving children's education program** – adding an energetic preschool group and preparing for ten bnei mitzvah in the next year.

Even as we flourish, we remain deeply committed to our founding principles:

- *Everyone* should have a seat at the High Holidays.
- *Everyone* should be embraced in our community — singles, families, twenty-somethings, and empty nesters; interfaith households and members of the LGBTQ community; people with disabilities, Jews of color, and Jews-by-choice.
- Financial capacity should never be a reason to turn someone away. Some members give \$50 a year and others give \$15,000 a year. *Everyone is welcome in our community.*

Now you have an opportunity to live out our principles. In the next few pages we'll describe how you can help the congregation's Sustaining Our Future campaign as we continue to reimagine the possibilities for Jewish life, identity, and community.

Please join and support our next chapter. In the words of our tradition, "It is not what one says, but rather what one does, that makes all the difference in the world" (Pirke Avot 1:17).

L'shalom,

Rabbi Laurie Zimmerman



We believe that Judaism is a means for bringing justice, holiness, and joy to our world.



וְהָיָה כְּבָרְכֶיךָ
שֵׁרְהוֹן הַפְּלִימִים י
תֵּהֱקַעְרָת וְעַתָּה ה
דְּסִקָּה וְרַחֵם הַתְּנַמִּי
תּוֹרַעֲלֵת שׁוֹנֵי וְכִסּוּ
עַתָּה בְּדִיּוֹ וְלִקְחוּ ב
מִזְעֹר וְעַתָּה צְרֵתִי
עַל כְּבִי שׁוֹנֵי
עַל כְּבִי כְּבִי

I grew up at Shaarei Shamayim, and as an adult the congregation has been a great home to come back to, in joy and in sorrow. When one of my friends died, the members were there. When another friend had a bat mitzvah, the members created the service and made it so meaningful.

Shaarei Shamayim has made room for my family, even though my sister and I are not neuro-typical. I am not very traditional, but I have learned so much about how to be a friend to all people. I now serve on the Coordinating Committee and help set the direction of the congregation.

- Sam Katz



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Our History

In 1989, a small group of Jews living in Madison founded Congregation Shaarei Shamayim following several years of attending High Holiday services at Gates of Heaven (Shaarei Shamayim in Hebrew) synagogue in James Madison Park. The group affiliated with the Reconstructionist and Jewish Renewal movements,

hired its first resident rabbi in 1996, and eventually welcomed Rabbi Laurie, who has provided leadership to our community for the past 16 years.

For the past several years we received generous support from Madison's Goodman Foundation to partially fund our operating costs. But the Goodman Foundation has announced a shift in its funding priorities. In four years, the foundation will stop making annual grants to Shaarei Shamayim and other Madison Jewish congregations and organizations. We are so thankful for all that the Goodman Foundation has provided us over the years — and especially for the substantial time they gave us to prepare for this change.

Over these next four years, we have the chance to come together for our own future. Madison needed this congregation in 1989, and it needs it now. Help us sustain this community to provide the next generation of Madison's Jews an open, pluralistic, and inclusive congregation that values participation from everyone.



I really love Shaarei Shamayim because it provides an active, open, and diverse community at a time when that feels especially vital. Our children love how interactive the Bet Sefer program is. In addition to learning about the stories and traditions of Judaism from an early age, they also really connect with Rabbi Laurie. I too had the opportunity to immerse myself in Jewish study and ritual this past year. I joined a group of eight adults who celebrated their bnei mitzvah together, which was a deeply enriching and fulfilling experience.

- Ashley Byock





Our Vision

Shaarei Shamayim is not the synagogue you grew up with.

We are open, pluralistic, and inclusive. We believe that Judaism is a means for bringing justice, holiness, and joy to our world.

We:

- Provide opportunities to explore Jewish ritual and meaning;
- Support our members during times of hardship and loss;
- Foster critical thinking and self-reflection in our children; and
- Engage in the contemporary issues of our society by fighting for a sustainable, just, and peaceful world.

We embrace community. We create space for our members and friends to deepen their Jewish lives, reconnect to their Judaism, or encounter it for the first time. We do this through our holiday celebrations, monthly havurot, Shabbat potlucks and services, learning opportunities, social justice work, and congregational committees. We do it by dropping off a lasagna when there's a new baby or by driving a fellow member to chemo. We find that going through life with others is preferable to going it alone.

That's why we're here.



Message from our President

I never imagined that when my wife, Sheryl, and I helped to found Shaarei Shamayim almost 30 years ago that we would end up creating such a

supportive community that would last for decades. Nor did I imagine that we would make so many lifelong friends. Now, we look forward to gathering with friends in community whenever we participate at congregational events.

Thank you for being a part of this amazing congregation. We are not just our different members representing all walks of life — we are a community — with a heart, a soul, and a mission.

Let's make sure we thrive for another 30 years and more.

Please choose all the ways you will help on the pledge form today.

Warm regards,

Jeff Spitzer-Resnick

What Your Dollars Do for Shaarei Shamayim

\$10 more per month pays for:

- Art supplies for a year of holiday celebrations
- Four prayer books
- Welcome packages for new members for a year
- Teen babysitters for five congregational programs

\$50 more per month pays for:

- Three scholars to teach at our services
- A full scholarship for a child to attend Bet Sefer
- The costs of running a yearly social action project
- One day of the winter retreat

Increasing your yearly pledge even a small amount can make a big difference. Making a contribution to the endowment fund of \$5,000, \$10,000, \$18,000 or more would give us the financial stability to support our ritual, cultural, educational, and social justice programs far into the future.

Most importantly, your generosity ensures that we will continue to benefit from the full-time leadership of Rabbi Laurie, Madison's longest-serving congregational rabbi.

How Can You Help?

You can join in sustaining our future in the following ways:



Help us attract new members.



Increase your annual dues with an additional donation.



Make a long-term investment by giving to our Sustaining Our Future endowment fund.

Pledge Form

You can help us sustain our future in three ways:

1 Help us attract new members - even three new members per year can help us sustain our future.

Know someone who would like to learn more about our community? Let us know how we can best share our information with them:

2 Increase your annual dues with an additional donation. Please consider 5% or more.

Please add \$ _____ to my annual pledge.

3 Give to the Sustaining Our Future endowment fund and make a long-term investment in the future.

- \$36,000 \$18,000 \$10,000
 \$5,000 \$1,800 \$360
 other amount: _____

For full payment of the pledge:

- My check is enclosed
 I will give my credit/debit card information online



If you would like to make a payment plan, please indicate the amount to be paid each year.

Year	Month	Total
2019		
2020		
2021		
2022		
2023		

Commitment to Pay

I/we understand that this signed pledge form confirms my/our intention to fulfill this commitment to Congregation Shaarei Shamayim.

Shaarei Shamayim is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization under the provisions of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions are tax deductible. Our federal tax identification number is 39-1678580.

Donor Signature(s) _____

Date _____

Public Recognition: Shaarei Shamayim's policy is to honor donors in our monthly newsletter without stating the amount donated. Unless you object, your name(s) will appear in the monthly newsletter following receipt of the donation.

- I prefer to be listed as anonymous

We Need Everyone to Sustain Our Future

If everyone in our congregation gave the same amount each year to sustain this incredible community, it would cost over \$1,200 per family. Not everyone can afford that — but everyone still deserves to be part of our community.

That's why we're asking for everyone to think hard about what they can contribute to ensure our future. We are continually grateful for all of our members who have given so much to this community.

Please join in today so that future members have the same opportunity.

Contact Information

Curious what a larger gift could do for Shaarei Shamayim?
Contact Tom Kaplan, chair of our fundraising campaign,
at kaplan@ssc.wisc.edu or 203-9358.

Questions about how to make payments?
Contact Joy Zotalis, our office manager,
at office@shamayim.org or 257-2944.

I joined Shaarei Shamayim five years ago, and I have become active in the community. About once a month I chant Torah, and I take much pleasure in this as I love Hebrew. Chanting seems to connect for me the present and the past of our tribe. I also teach beginners' Hebrew to anyone who wishes to learn.

Perhaps my favorite activity is Torah study. Here I find a core group of friends, and others come and go as time allows them. This is an amazing group — we have all become fond of one another, and the discussions are always interesting. Finally, at the High Holidays I feel honored to blow the shofar, trying to hear the distant sound of other shofarim all over the world.

- Bici Pettit-Barron



Shaarei
Shamayim

Inclusive Jewish Community

