



Dear Shomrei Torah Family and Friends,

It is in the fiber of our being to serve you, our members and friends. Due to the virus, with heavy hearts, we have canceled all in-synagogue programming until further notice.

While we are unable to offer any on-site programming (such as our community Seder, adult education, STARS classes, and meetings), we are streaming Shabbat evening services, Torah study on Shabbat morning, Shabbat morning services, and Jewish Meditation sessions on Sunday afternoons.

Stay tuned to your weekly chai-lites or at www.cstsr.org as we prepare to make more things available for you online.

Our office staff is working from home and can still assist you via email at:

Angelica Steinman, Administrative Assistant: cst@cstsr.org

Seraphima Chisler, Facility Coordinator: aa@cstsr.org

Morgan Folger, Youth Coordinator: youth@cstsr.org

Denise Harrison, Temple Liaison: denise@cstsr.org

Julie Hash, Office Administrator: ra@cstsr.org

Rabbi George can be reached at (707)480-6490 or rabbig@cstsr.org.

These are frightening and uncertain times. We are a strong and resilient community; together we will be OK. Shelter at home if you can, practice social distancing when you go out, and always wash those hands!

Safety, health, and Shalom to everyone. Please join me during these difficult days in our virtual sacred space.

Rabbi George

We are excited about our new website, www.cstsr.org!

You can now login and see your account activity, easily see what is happening at Shomrei Torah, and register online for events & classes. Need help logging in? Visit www.cstsr.org/getting_started for step-by-step instructions for logging into your account for the first time. As always, if you do not wish to make an account, you may continue to RSVP to events by contacting the office.



Virtual Passover Seder

Friday, April 10, 6:15 PM

A Virtual Seder is better than no Seder at all! Join Rabbi George, Cantorial Soloist Erica Wisner and our Youth Director, Morgan Folger for a Virtual Seder Experience. Visit www.cstsr.org for a link to view the Seder and other materials online.

Wise Aging with Rabbi Meredith Cahn

Friday, April 3, 11:00 AM

Classes will be available via Zoom, please contact Meredith for the link: mcahn2@mac.com

This group is based on, but not limited to, *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience and Spirit*, by Rabbi Rachel Cowan, z"l, and Linda Thal. We will explore how to find meaning, joy, acceptance and wisdom on our journey into our later years. Jewish and other texts, reflection, and sharing, will let us learn from each other and from our sources.



Creating Sacred Space: Jewish Mindfulness Meditation

April 5, 12, 26: 4:30 PM - 5:45 PM

Classes will be available via live-stream and Zoom, visit www.cstsr.org for the link to these.

Are we happy? Are we living the life we want to live? Mindfulness Meditation is the practice of cultivating our attention to the present moment. As we learn to quiet our minds, we see our truth more clearly, and open a path to living a fuller, happier, healthier life. Jewish Mindfulness adds the teachings of our tradition to deepen the meditative experience. This course, led by Rabbi George Gittleman, will include teaching, meditation instruction, and periods of silence.

Jewish Literary Circle

Plans for online participation are underway, contact group leader Marian McKenna at chabansky@yahoo.com for details.

The Jewish Literary Circle, one of the LifeLong Learning programs, meets monthly to read Jewish literature and other published material in an atmosphere of stimulating discussion. Participants choose the reading selections for the upcoming months. Anyone can join anytime.

Upcoming Dates (Start time is approximately 6:30pm, varies seasonally)

April 16: Selection of short YouTube films

May 21: *The Last Watchman of Old Cairo* by Michael David Lukas

June 18: *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbor* by Yossi Klein Halevi

Yom HaShoah Commemoration Live-Stream

Monday, April 20, 7:00 PM

Shomrei Torah will be streaming a *Yom HaShoah* Commemoration (Holocaust Remembrance Day) with Rabbi George and Cantorial Soloist Eric Wisner on the evening of *Yom HaShoah*. Please join us via live-stream at www.cstsr.org.

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, June 3, 6:15 PM

Free, dinner provided, please RSVP to cstsr.org/event/annual-meeting. Please stay tuned, we are currently planning to have this meeting on-site.

Please join us at our annual meeting for a free dinner, conversation and a little business. We will honor our hard-working volunteers and learn how we fund our operations and where your money is being spent.

Please check your mail in April for our Annual Report. If you would like to share your thoughts or questions about the Annual Report, please feel free to contact Rabbi George at rabbig@cstsr.org, Rabbi Stephanie at rabbikramer@cstsr.org, or Sharon Bauman, President at sharonbbauman@gmail.com.

Section 2. Number, Nomination and Election. The Board of Directors shall consist of not less than 11 nor more than 15 members in good standing; the exact number of Directors shall be fixed within these limits by resolution of the Board. Nominations of Directors shall be made by the Nominating Committee appointed by the President with the approval of the Board of Directors. The committee shall consist of three Congregation members, including at least one Director who shall serve as chair. Ninety days before the annual membership meeting the President shall publish a notice in the Congregation bulletin calling for members to submit names of possible candidates for Directors to the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee shall nominate one candidate for each Director position to be filled. It shall present its nominations to the Board of Directors for their approval at least 30 days prior to the end of the fiscal year. Nominations for Directors may also be made by petition of members with voting rights representing at least 10% of households in good standing at the time the petition is submitted. Evidence of the nominee's willingness to serve must accompany the petition.

Religious Imagination

By Rabbi George Gittleman

Being hopeful is perhaps our greatest spiritual challenge. That is why I love Norman Fischer's latest book, *The World Could Be Otherwise*.

"The imagination is powerful...(and) essential for our humanness." He writes. "The Bible and other religious texts, folktales, myths, ... poems, plays, novels, ... music, ritual, dreams – all imaginative productions rise up from the unconscious to expand the soul, to help us feel who we really are and what the world really is... Imagination is not an escape from reality. Imagination deepens and enriches reality...To go beyond the possible to the impossible, we need to imagine it."

He argues that one of the main purposes of religion is to imagine a world that does not exist. Values, norms, ideals, actions that seem impossible, idealistic, out of reach. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. use to say, "find a way where there is no way."

"What is imagination?" He asks. "How can human beings conceive of the impossible (absolute goodness, perfect beauty, truth) and yearn for it? How can we have passionate feelings about



Rabbi George

imaginary intangibles such as freedom and justice? ... Imagination expands our hearts and minds. It brings forth all forms of innovation... All idealism and moral vision depends on imagination."

In short, he argues that in this time of environmental crisis, deep political polarization and upheaval, we need to resist the doomsday rabbit hole and imagine a world that could be otherwise. Almost everywhere you look in the history of the Jewish people one sees the crucial role imagination played in our survival and our ability to thrive and contribute at the highest level, where ever we lived.

Unable to own land, to settle in ways that other people could, we imagined a world where we were sovereign, built palaces in time, wrote a sea of literature, pioneered in almost every intellectual endeavor known to human kind. Persecuted and expelled from almost everywhere we lived, we imagined a new reality,

new lives in new places, and recreated ourselves over and over again.

For almost 2,000 years we imagined we would somehow return to our ancestral land. Who would have thought it could happen? A language resurrected, a people reconstituted, a nation reborn. Flawed as it is, the modern state of Israel is an unprecedented feat of imagination; "finding a way where there was no way."

Hertzel was right when he said, *im tirzu lo agadah*: "If you imagine it, it is not a fairytale". The grand sweep of Jewish history shows the power of religious imagination. The ability to imagine a reality that does not exist and seems out of reach is equally powerful on a smaller scale.

So often for example, our lack of imagination keeps us stuck in a narrow, constricted place with other people; we're upset, hurt, angry and we simply can't imagine another way out of the conflict we are in. We can't imagine their position, feelings or perspective. We also can't imagine shifting our own perspective. We are sure we are right and they are wrong. Our heart hardens, frozen in a conflict void of imagination.

Yet our tradition calls us to

v'ahavta le'arekha kamokha: "to love our neighbor, the other, the stranger as ourselves". That is a great feat of moral or religious imagination! It's a lot to ask, but that is precisely the role of religion; to imagine a reality, a way of being; a world that, to date does not exist. Hope is imagination's "kissing cousin". Together they shine a bright light on the road ahead... "Our mission is to plant ourselves at the gates of Hope" — writes the poet, Victoria Safford –

*Not the prudent gates of Optimism,
Which are somewhat narrower.
Not the stalwart, boring gates of
Common Sense;
Nor the strident gates of Self-
Righteousness,
Which creak on shrill and angry
hinges
(People cannot hear us there; they
cannot pass through)
Nor the cheerful, flimsy garden
gate of
"Everything is gonna' be all right."
But a different, sometimes lonely
place,
The place of truth-telling,
About your own soul first of all and
its condition.
The place of resistance and defiance,
The piece of ground from which you
see the world
Both as it is and as it could be
As it will be;
The place from which you glimpse
not only struggle,
But the joy of the struggle.
And we stand there, beckoning and
calling,
Telling people what we are seeing
Asking people what they see.*

- Victoria Safford



The numbers are in!

76% of our member households participated in our 2019 Tradition of Giving Annual campaign! We raised \$127,641!

Thank you so much to everyone who participated. Thanks to all of you, we can pay the bills for our hard-working staff, programming costs and beautiful campus.

Want to join a Chavurah?

New *Chavurah* groups are forming! A *chavurah* is a small social group of like-minded members who gather for the purpose of sharing communal experiences such as lifecycle events and/or celebrating Shabbat and holidays. It's a great way to make new friends, have fun, grow closer, and strengthen the connection with other CST members.

To get connected to the newly forming *Chavurot*, please contact Marian McKenna: 650-776-6543, chabansky@yahoo.com or Jan Schwartz: 707-479-1110, jangschwartz@me.com.

Go Paperless!

Save a tree by opting to read your monthly Voice online. Contact the office at cst@cstsr.org to make the change. Please note that this online version of the Voice may be modified to exclude names and contact information for the privacy of our members.



"You only leave home when home won't let you stay"

~ From the poem, Home, by Warsan Shire, Somali poet

Over 200 people came on a Saturday night to hear CST member Padi Selwyn give a heartrending account of her 10-day experience at the Matamoros, Mexico refugee camp. After hearing about the humanitarian crisis at the border due to the new "Remain in Mexico" program, she could no longer sit on the sidelines.

Compelled to go and help, Padi and two friends raised \$40,000 to send critically needed supplies-- food, sleeping mats, portable showers, tents, diapers. Collaborating with local aid groups, they pulled wagons across the bridge over the border to bring meals and supplies to grateful children and families. They served food, read to the children, set up portable showers, and showed they cared.

Two other speakers addressed local consequences of US immigration policy. Ana Salgado, immigration activist with Comité VIDA, described the impact of recent ICE activity in Santa Rosa. Immigrants feel hunted and vulnerable. Rick Coshnear, immigration attorney with VIDAS, spoke about financial and legal difficulties asylum seekers face, and the need for community members to provide "accompaniment," to bring immigrants to hearings, help them obtain housing, legal and medical care.

Sponsored by the Social Action Committee, "The End of the American Dream" program attracted many members of CST and the local community. Rabbi George introduced the program, sharing that Jews, because of our history as immigrants and our Jewish values have an obligation to welcome and care for the stranger. Padi identified organizations to support that help refugees stranded in Matamoros: Resource Center Matamoros and Lawyers for Good Government.

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(unless otherwise noted)

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Office Hours

Monday–Friday

9:00 AM–12 Noon;

1:00–5:00 PM

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February Board Wrap up

Our hard-working board had another busy month working towards our Congregation's successes, programs and future needs.

For those of you who have not taken notice—we have an exciting new website and we encourage you to check it out! All you have to do is log on and create your account which allows you to do all kinds of things such as paying bills, signing up for programming, making donations and so much more! It also looks really nice and is very easy to use. Thank you to Julie Hash for all her hard work making this site so functional. Feel free to pass along any compliments or glitches that you may find.

By the time you are reading this our new Member Wine and Cheese will have passed. About 30-40 people noshed, mingled and learned more about all that our congregation has to offer. A big thank-you to Marian McKenna and our wonderful office staff for making this event happen after it's cancellation due to the Kinkade fire October 2019.

Erica Magers is happy to report that she's been having fun working with David Gottlieb on the Purim carnival which was on Sunday, March 8. Adults brought their inner child and actual children to enjoy the fun! Tirelessly, they all returned on Monday, March 9 to attend the Purim Schpiel, and watched our talented members, young and young-at-heart tell the story of Purim through a Hamilton-themed enactment.

Des Shapiro reported that the Men's retreat has 31 members signed up! Please note that it has been rescheduled for November 6-8. It's going to be a fantastic weekend at the Marconi Center—a big THANKS to Des and many wonderful members: Sam Rose, Jim Campagna, Peter Copen, Richard Bagel, Russ Sawyer, John DeAguiar and Jerry Newman for their hard work to make this a fun and memorable experience!

Todah Rabah to the entire congregation for making our Tradition of Giving such a successful campaign. Ending on January 31, **we raised \$127,641**. Even more impressive and worth bragging about—**76% of our congregation participated**. We truly couldn't have done it without you!!!

Don't forget that Passover is coming up in April, we are preparing a virtual experience for you, check our website for details.

Until next time...

Women's Retreat Space is Still Available!

Friday, October 23 – Sunday, October 25

Women of CST, join us for our 12th biennial Women's Retreat held at the beautiful Westerbeke Ranch in Sonoma. For more information and to register, visit cstsr.org/event/womens-retreat.

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Combatants for Peace

On Sunday, January 26, many gathered for a presentation by Yoni Kallai and Ismail Assad, members of Combatants for Peace - an egalitarian, bi-national, grassroots organization that was founded on the belief that the cycle of violence can only be broken when Israelis and Palestinians join forces.



STaRS So Far...

A Throwback from our year so far at STaRS!



Making blankets to donate at our *L'dor V'dor* Program



Shaking the Lulav on Sukkot



Making Matzah Ball Soup in cooking chug



Chanukah paper cutting



Hanging out with Diana Shmiana during PJ Library Day

STaRS at Home

Dear STaRS Families,

We are so bummed that we are unable to meet in person. We miss seeing you bright and early on Sunday to learn, play, and pray, but want to do everything we can to keep our community safe and well. We hope everyone is hanging in there during this turbulent and challenging time, and is staying safe. Ways to stay connected with the STaRS community and learn with us virtually at home will be sent out very soon, as well as resources for ways to study and practice from home.

Looking for ideas for fun Jewish activities and lessons that you can do from home? Check out these resources:

- **PJ Library** has a library filled with Jewish book recommendations, crafts, recipes, lessons, and more for children ages 0-12: pjlibrary.org
- **BimBam** creates amazing animated videos that teach different Jewish lessons and stories from the Torah that are interesting for all ages. They also have sing-alongs and Jewish arts and crafts how-to videos (including Jewish slime!): bimbam.com

Also check out the Apple or Google play stores for a host of free apps for practicing and learning the *alef bet* at home.

More activities and events to virtually connect coming to your inboxes soon! Sending you all health, *chazak* (strength), and *shalom*.

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Program Director

To Inquire:
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TIME SENSITIVE

APRIL SERVICES

Services will be available to watch via live-stream. Visit www.cstsr.org and click the link on the front page of our website. There will be no services held at Congregation Shomrei Torah.

Friday, April 3

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, April 4

Torah portion: Tzav

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Rabbi George*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, April 10

6:15 pm – *Virtual Passover Seder*

Saturday, April 11

Torah portion: Special for Pesach

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Cheryl Rosenstein*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, April 17

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, April 18

Torah portion: Shmini

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by Rabbi George*

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

Friday, April 24

6:15 pm – *Shabbat Service*

Saturday, April 25

Torah portion: Tazria-Metzora

8:45 am – *Torah Study led by*

Rabbi Meredith Cahn

10:30 am – *Shabbat Service*

See our latest calendar at www.cstsr.org

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CONGREGATION

- To worship God in accordance with the beliefs and teachings of Reform Judaism.
- To cultivate and nurture in ourselves and our children a love and understanding of Jewish heritage.
- To develop a sensitive, caring and supportive congregational community where all are welcome and included.
- To act with responsibility and compassion in our community.
- To support the principles of equality, freedom and shalom among all peoples.