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.cstrsr.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@cstrsr.org
Seraphima Chisler, Facility Coordinator: aa@cstrsr.org
Morgan Folger, Youth Coordinator: youth@cstrsr.org
Denise Harrison, Temple Liaison: denise@cstrsr.org
Julie Hash, Office Administrator: ra@cstrsr.org
Rabbi George can be reached at (707)480-6490 or rabbig@cstrsr.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
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
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 was 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 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’rekha 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 the cheerful, flimsy garden gate of
(Not the cheerful, flimsy garden gate)
“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,
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As it will be;
The place from which you glimpse
Not 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 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.
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...

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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!

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.
Whatever your reason to belong, Shomrei Torah belongs to you!
Services will be available to watch via live-stream. Visit www.cstr.org and click the link on the front page of our website. There will be no services held at Congregation Shomrei Torah.

APRIL SERVICES

Friday, April 3
6:15 pm – Shabbat Service

Saturday, April 4
Torah portion: Teav
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.cstr.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.