

# Rabbi's Reveries

Rabbi Stefan Tiwy



Shalom everybody,

Finally – spring is here! After long and dreary months with little daylight and stray snow fall up until a month ago, nature seems to finally have awoken from its hibernation. And along with the arrival of spring time, we got to celebrate the holidays of Purim and Passover.

Thanks to the way the calendar worked out this year, we had a full week of Purim celebrations: From our very well-attended fun Purim

Carnival of our Religious School over the actual Purim Eve Service with festive Megillah reading to our adult-only “Marvelous Mrs. Maisel” Purim Shpiel – the UJC has been abuzz with life and celebration.

Same goes for Passover: A few weeks back, I got to learn with interested adults from our congregation about the Four Children of the Haggadah and the lessons we can pull from them for our own lives and families. My adult-ed session was followed by our Model Passover Seder, which gained completely new momentum this year with active, movement-oriented participation of our religious school kids envisioned by Cantor Kessler. Pesach being

a home-based holiday, this program enabled us to prepare and share ideas for meaningful Seders at everybody's homes.

In our tradition, Passover is the holiday of freedom – not only physical freedom, but also mental and emotional. Getting confronted in the news by some of the terrible actions people are capable of, such as the terrible massacres in the Muslim community in New Zealand in March and the Christian community in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, we are once more shockingly reminded of the ongoing need for our world to be healed.

In times of crisis, seeing people stand up in support can be a powerful force for good as well as a starting point for the healing process. I feel honored that I had the chance to join the Muslim community in Newtown at the Al-Hedaya Islamic Center last month along with Cantor Kessler for a Solidarity Jumu'ah Friday prayer service.

The community was very welcoming and appreciative of the attendance of neighbors and clergy representatives of different faith groups showing their support.



Looking ahead, we have several more events coming up on an almost weekly basis: On **Friday, May 3**, we will celebrate our annual **Brotherhood Shabbat**, and the following **Sunday, May 5**, we will already embark on our **Field Trip to the Bronx Zoo!** More than 80 people have signed up for this field trip, and I am excited that we get to explore this enormous zoo together.

There are also several special services as well: On **Friday, May 25**, we will experiment with a **“Downstairs Shabbat”** in the auditorium to allow members with difficulty walking the stairs to attend. Also, **Shavuot** is coming up on **Saturday eve, June 8 at 6 pm**, when we will hold our festival evening service (incl. Yizkor) and ceremony of **Confirmation** for our 10th-graders. Our confirmation students will participate in the leading of the service and also share their experiences from confirmation class that evening.

There is one more special event before summer break, and that will be on **Friday, June 14 at 7 pm**: The UJC will have its first **“Shabbat at the Park”** service at Bennett Park in Bethel together with our neighbors at Temple Sholom in New Milford. Keep your eyes peeled for more information, including guidelines for a shared potluck dinner that evening.

Looking forward to celebrating these special occasions together, with all best wishes,

Rabbi Tiwy