

All,

The laws of the Jewish people have been through many iterations. You could start with the ten ([or 15](#)) commandments written on stone tablets. They were then expanded, interpreted, implemented, and refined throughout our history, from the days of the First and Second Temples to the birth of the rabbinic movement to the generations of scholars in shtetls in Eastern Europe and in [villages in India](#). While Shir Tikvah's bylaws are not as all-encompassing as the laws of our tradition—click [here](#) for a set of teachings on improper possession of your neighbor's livestock, teachings which I actually find quite useful in other contexts—they do help guide how we work as a community. And, consistent with thousands of years of Jewish practice, we continue to refine what we have received from our founders some 30 years ago.

As was presented at the 2020 Annual Meeting, a committee has been working to update Shir Tikvah's bylaws. In the coming months, the Board will find ways to talk with the Congregation about proposed changes, from the clerical (using defined terms consistently, for example) to the technical (addressing advancing technology, for example) to the practical (acknowledging that our bylaws were written when we were perhaps 50 households and we are now more than 550 households). We are looking to clean up and simplify the bylaws, so that they set forward the template that will serve us for the next 30 years. Updates to the bylaws will need congregational approval.

If you have questions already, please [contact me](#).

Annual Meeting - another change

And speaking of the bylaws, perhaps you recall that we had to jump through a lot of hoops to permit a remote annual meeting in 2020. Because we were careful about how we made changes and because we were, perhaps, too COVID-optimistic, we only changed the bylaws to permit a remote annual meeting in 2020. At the moment, our 2021 annual meeting is set for early June. I am, sadly, confident that we will not *all* be able to gather in-person although I'm hopeful that *some* gathering might be possible. As such, we are going to need to do what we did last Spring: I will issue a call for a special ballot to the congregation where the Board will propose to you an amendment to our bylaws to allow for the 2021 annual meeting to be conducted remotely, or in a hybrid format.

Vaccine questions?

The Twin Cities Maimonides Society (an affinity group supported by both the Minneapolis and the St. Paul Jewish Federations) is hosting a Jewish community-wide virtual program on COVID-19 Vaccines with Dr. Ruth Lynfield, State Epidemiologist with Minnesota Department of Health. Dr. Lynfield will address the vaccines that will be offered, what they will do, who will receive them, what the timeline looks like, and any other questions that participants submit. Half of this program will be Q&A. The program will be held Sunday, January 31, 2021 at 1 PM. Free, but you need to pre-register, which you can do by clicking [here](#). You can submit your questions in advance.

Sanctuary Committee

Four years ago this month, Shir Tikvah declared itself to be a Sanctuary Congregation; we are in service to those who have been unjustly marginalized. I am certain that I cannot calculate how many thousands of volunteer hours have gone into our efforts to support those in need; this has been an enormous endeavor driven by our faithful commitment to welcome the stranger, to care for people for whom the last four years have been an incredible trauma. I thank everyone who has volunteered their time and hearts, with a special shout out to our co-chairs Dennis Guillaume and Pat Karasov, and Rabbi Lekach-Rosenberg. There is always a need for volunteers and financial support. Are you willing? Please email [Dennis](#) or [Pat](#) for volunteer availability and needs and email Executive Director [Alison](#) to offer general or program-specific shekels.

Meet some members!

We miss each other, we miss the opportunities to get to know each other in easy ways, and many of us don't know many of us. To that end, allow me to introduce a few congregants. Every month, I will send a few bios and photos, provided that you [email me](#) a blurb and a photo?

Lisa Brownstein (she/her) writes “An east coast transplant, I’ve been living in Minnesota since 1995 and a Shir Tikvah member since 2012. I’m a regular at Friday night services and one of a few folks who enjoys dancing, even on Zoom! My main connection to Shir Tikvah is through song, lending my voice both during services and in the choir. Outside Shir Tikvah, I work at University of Minnesota Extension doing human resources work in our administrative offices on the St Paul campus. Due to Covid, I have been residing in St Cloud with my partner, Jon, and my cat, Mac, has become my new officemate while I work remotely. While I enjoy our Zoom Shabbats, I do miss singing and being together with our community and look forward to one day doing so again.”



Jakob Tenofsky-Ealy (he/him) sends along these words of introduction: “Hello to all my STs! I am one of the many Jacobs of the Julie Jacobs squad, but I believe the only Jacob with the J-A-K-O-B spelling. Oh yeah! And I’m the JJ Squad member with the fur-ball erupting from my cranium. By now you’ve caught on that I am the resident goofball, and I would like for you to know that I wear my title proudly. I enjoy laughing and smiling as often as possible, as well as infecting others with the silliness! I can be found at Shir Tikvah stealing hugs, or at live-shows watching stand-up comedians like Christopher Titus.” Jakob below, on the left, with the classic afro. ST member Jacob Andrews is on the right.



How are you doing?

The seas are still choppy. We are all in the same storm but we are not all in the same boat. Our rabbis welcome you. And, there are other professional services available to you. If you are concerned about your or a loved one’s mental health, please consider reaching out to [Jewish Family and Children’s Services](#) (in Minneapolis), [Jewish Family Services](#) (in St. Paul), [NAMI-MN](#), or call the national suicide prevention hotline for immediate support at 1-800-273-TALK.

As always, feel free to [contact me](#).

Bruce

