

All,

For *Kol Nidre* last month, our livestream counted 1130 unique devices. We have just had our largest High Holy Days gathering by several hundred people. I hope you were able to join us; I hope you found your moments of connection; I hope you were moved. Please accept this incomplete acrostic of gratitude, short both on the people listed and the work they did.

Rabbi **A**rielle Lekach-Rosenberg, who sang to/for our souls, and led this whole project with vision and inspiration;

Pianist Eric **B**rook, who tickled the ivories;

The **C**losed-captioning team, who welcomed all (volunteer with [Leykn Schmatz](#));

Rabbi **D**ebra Rappaport, who taught us, held us, and who created our *chavurot*;

Nikolina **E**ricksen-Gunther, *Yizkor* slide-show master and able administrator;

The STiFTY **F**ood drive to support those in need;

MJ **G**ilbert, who lifted us up and cracked our hearts open;

Our **H**osts at St. Joan of Arc;

Chazzan **I**lene Safyan, an unexpected gift of time and harmony;

Carmen **J**ohnson, our fabulous custodian and **J**ill-of-all-trades;

**K**ugel\*, with which we broke the fast (\*no raisins!; possibly the most controversial thing I've said as synagogue president?);

Sara **L**ahyani, our logistics and member engagement queen;

Rabbi **M**ichael Latz, who preached fire and brought us through it;

Courtney **N**guyen, who tracked your contributions;

Alison **O**lig, an excellent Executive Director executing directives excellently;

You **P**eople, who made our virtual *minyán* a hundred-times over (and your **P**ets, who sometimes wandered in);

A **Q**uestion: Will you [send me](#) your own gratitudes, or better acrostics?;

[Rebbetz](#)-men Noam Lekach Rosenberg, Michael Simon, and Bobby Zelle;

The **S**hir Tikvah choir and the Community **S**ing leaders, all of you, in Zoom harmonies;

**T**win Cities Sound, who made the tech work;

**U**ndaunted shofar-blowing from Ginny Levi, Jacob Andrews (also seen on [national wire services](#) mourning Justice Ginsburg), Hersh Berman, and Luke, Janet, Sam & Asher Weisberg;

The **V**iddui, our confessional prayer, our failures and our commitment to a new start (and whose format I have taken);

Jonah (by Charlie Elliot) and the **W**hale (by John Orenstein), wonderfully narrated by Debbie Orenstein, for a youth service, between songs from Shana Eisenberg;

**X**cellent Torah and Haftorah Readers, up and down the program;

Forrest **Y**esnes, for managing our engaging youth services;

**Zoom**, because as much as I struggle with where we are, I can't imagine where we'd be if we were working with older technology.

### **Vote**

Shir Tikvah is committed to every eligible voter in this congregation having their voice heard and their vote counted. Minnesotans can find information at the [Secretary of State's Office](#). Information about early, in-person, absentee voting for every county in Minnesota is available [here](#). Make a plan to vote, make a plan to get a few other people to vote. Do you need someone to wrap himself in a hazmat suit and carry you to the appropriate early voting station? Contact board member and JCA organizer [Dave Snyder](#). Seriously! We want you to vote.

### **Board updates**

The board took a month off as we came rolling out of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and into Sukkot and Simchat Torah. But we have much on our plate for the coming year, in addition to the usual and critical attention to the finances of keeping this *shul* strong. We hope to deepen our work on racial equity, refine our by-laws, keep exploring our facilities needs, lift up the work of the Membership, Caring Community, and Sanctuary committees, continue to improve our communications with you, celebrate the launch of our new youth education program, cheer for the adult education work, and support our amazing staff. Oh, and *daven* with you, Thursday mornings, Friday evenings for Shabbat, and Saturdays. All that information is in the weekly e-news. (If you joined us last week with Michael Twitty, find his blog

### **Meet some members!**

Shir Tikvah was founded in 1988 by an intrepid group of Jews who wished to construct a community that reflected and amplified their values. They planned their launch at a Green Mill on Hamline Avenue, where a few tables in a noisy pizza joint were sufficient. Not yet a *minyan*, they then rented a room at the St. Paul JCC. Soon, Room 107 wasn't enough. In 1994, the congregation surpassed 200 households, and its leaders located their first freestanding home at 1360 Minnehaha Parkway. Our congregation now has more than 550 families, perhaps 900 adults, and over 200 kids involved in our programming. The days when every family knew each other, the days (pre-COVID) when name tags weren't so evidently needed, the days when perhaps you could just be "Amy" or "Amy F." have passed. It is a sign of our successful radical hospitality that we have grown so and that our congregation is as vibrant as it ever was.

Still—and even more now with COVID—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 more bios and photos out in this letter, provided that you [email me a blurb and a photo](#)? Thanks to Peter and Ellen for accepting my invitation and leading!

Peter Berman (he/him) introduces himself as "a Minnesotan by choice, definitely a member of this amazing community by choice. I'm a husband, father, tv news videographer, passionate about using my visual skills to be a storyteller. I'm a teacher, a passionate advocate of human/civil rights of all, an MS Warrior/Advocate and proudly a 'red diaper baby.' I've been active at Shir Tikvah using my skills in the visual arts and lately on our *Shomrim* team. When you see me please don't hesitate to say hello, ask me about MS, ask me anything."



Ellen Kennedy (she/her) shares: “I’ve been a member of Shir Tikvah for 28 years. My children, Jonathan and Louisa, had their bar and bat mitzvahs at Shir Tikvah, and it’s where I was married ten years ago. I served on the board and on many committees over the years. As the director of a human rights organization ([World Without Genocide](#)), I cherish Shir Tikvah’s commitment to *tikkun olam* and to the congregation’s advocacy for social justice. This is at the heart of what Shir Tikvah means to me.” Below, Ellen and husband Leigh Lawton.



#### **A reminder**

Our building [remains closed](#). In this pandemic, our hearts ache over how isolation and loneliness are also contagious and sometimes become (or exacerbate) mental illness. 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

