



Shabbat B'shallach
10 Shevat 5778 / January 26, 2018

Dear Shir Tikvah:

In our Torah portion this week, the Israelites sing a robust song of joy as they march from slavery to freedom. It is known by our tradition as "Shirat Hayam," the Song of the Sea and embodied in the musical notes are the twin harmonies of freedom and responsibility: the freedom to worship God as Jews and the responsibility to care for one another. Why? We know the heart of the stranger. Because we were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Shir Tikvah-Song of Hope-has been singing this ancient, new song for 30 years. One year ago, in response to the current political climate and the vile statements issued about immigrants, our Board of Trustees declared Shir Tikvah a Sanctuary Congregation. Few moral issues are as clear in Jewish tradition as our responsibility to immigrants. Declaring ourselves a Sanctuary Congregation-that we would welcome an immigrant into our physical home if they seek sanctuary-was a decision the board and rabbis thoughtfully considered and determined was our central moral responsibility.

Our Sanctuary Immigrant Justice team, lead by Dennis Guillaume and Amy Lange, has worked countless hours over the past year to prepare our physical space, our volunteer capacity, and our support network should we host someone seeking Sanctuary. Supported by Rabbi Rosenberg and John Humleker, the Sanctuary Team has done exemplary work as we live into our Jewish values of hachnasat orchim-radical hospitality. Thank God for each of them!

Shir Tikvah is part of a network of more than 900 Sanctuary and Sanctuary-Supporting congregations in Minnesota and throughout the country, including First Universalist, Beth Jacob, and Mt. Zion. We are part of a growing network of loving, compassionate, justice-seeking spiritual communities who proclaim daily the dignity and value of every single human being. What a blessing!

People have asked about the timeline for welcoming guests to Shir Tikvah and what that might look like. Our priority is safeguarding the dignity, privacy, and safety of any Shir Tikvah guest, all the more so with anyone staying with us in Sanctuary. This may mean that if a person or family does come to stay with us, we may not be sharing this information widely with the congregation. In some situations, it may be important that only a very few people be aware of a person's presence with us. We ask that you trust our sanctuary leadership team to safeguard our congregation and any guest we might host.

But what about welcoming people and our commitment to Radical Hospitality? We should always greet people in our community with a warm welcome, and today, with fewer questions, especially folks we don't know. Together, we navigate the complexity of this work and welcome you in moments of question or confusion to reach out with spiritual curiosity and generosity. We engage this holy work with moral clarity, humility, and love.

If you would like to volunteer to support Shir Tikvah's Sanctuary efforts, please contact Amy.

As we live into our ancient song of hope today, I am forever grateful to each of you as we lift our voices in song, hope, love, and justice.

Shabbat Shalom,
Michael