

Sh'lach Lkha 5778
Rabbi Michael Adam Latz
Shir Tikvah
8 June 2018

כל תשלחו אבתיו למטה אחד איש אחד ישראל לבני נתן אשר-אני כנען את-ארץ ויתרו אנשים שלח-לך
בהם נשיא

“Send leaders to scout the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelite people; send one man from each of their ancestral tribes, each one a chieftain among them.

So Moses, by God’s command, sent them out from the wilderness of Paran, all the men being leaders of the Israelites.

V'eleh Shamotam: These are their names.” [Numbers 13:1-3].

And Luke Weisberg, Chair of the Board, called unto the Congregation of Shir Tikvah, a robust song of fierce hope, and spoke to Bruce Manning, President Elect, in 2016, charging him along with Howard Orenstein and Judy Hollander, Kay Harris and Eli Kramer, Amy Funk and Greg Leder, with support from John Humleker, Executive Director, and the rabbis, to seek out a home for an ever growing collective of people—beautiful activists and elders with wisdom-worn bodies; parents with giggling children and students of Torah; dreamers of dignity and lovers of community; sweet singers of the people Israel—lifting a vision of hope into a world on fire.

For a year they toiled in the vineyard of the Eternal, crafting a Facilities Advisory plan that offered Shir Tikvah three pathways as they leaned into the question, “What are the facilities Shir Tikvah needs to do our work in the world.” As they scouted the land like our ancient forbearers, they came forth last High Holy Days with three brilliant spiritual possibilities for Shir Tikvah to live into our future:

1. Seek to transform our current building here at 1360 W. Minnehaha Parkway. And so we've hired and met with Mohammed Lawall—an architect who is drawing up plans to see what is possible here to fit our every growing people, that today has 536 households. We hope to see what is possible here—and what it might cost—sometime this summer.
2. Find a new space in the urban core of the Twin Cities. We've engaged Cushman-Wakefield commercial realtors to help us scout out the land to see what might be possible. We a people of wander-lust and wonder-lust; what might a new facility offer us by living into our vision and our dreams?
3. Finally, to co-locate with another community, such as First Universalist on Dupont where we've celebrated High Holy Days for the past 23 years. The clergy and leadership have been in deep conversation about what this could potentially look like and how both communities could live deeper into our spiritual purpose should we share a sacred space. They have their own timeline as they work on construction in their building and while we do not know what the future holds, we affirm that both our communities are strengthen when we partner together for justice, learning, and communal celebration.

The leaders of Shir Tikvah—called forth in a generation when most congregations are in serious decline and losing members—hold bountiful questions and sacred responsibility with *binah*—a deep commitment to spiritual reflection; *chochma*—listening to the wisdom of the leaders and the wisdom of the congregation and the wisdom of the rabbis and the wisdom of experts; and *da'at*—the promise of evaluating each possibility on the merits of what we hear and what we learn. In November in a large communal gathering of 60 community members and again this past April, they held eight listening sessions and met with more than 90 congregants to engage a conversation about values, our dreams, our sacred purpose as we move forward. They have sought to live a soulful leadership that nurtures curiosity, reflection, and the responsibility to act with integrity.

We as a congregation are deep in this holy work right now. The board of trustees met last night and spent hours wrestling with powerful question of purpose, meaning, resources, vision; they are humans— Luke and Bruce, Julie and Tamar, Barry and Ben, Eli and Amy, Gayle and Jeff and Rachel and Ray, Bonnie and Joel, John and Robin, Gay and MJ, Carin and Anne—our people of deep moral commitment to our shared project, who live the best of our Torah—to be a people in covenantal love with the Divine, to create a sacred home that seeks to marry the work in our sanctuary with our work on the streets.

The scouts in Torah and the leaders of our Board know they do not have forever; that the walls of this home are like those of the Midrash with Rabbi Akiva—collapsing inward; that our building is increasingly a barrier for us to do our work in the world. They are seeking with open hearts.

We are living in a moment in history when we are rightfully appalled by many in our public leadership; elected officials acting with such moral repugnance it makes our hearts ache as they tear apart the fabric of our democracy. There are moments when it seems hard to remember that there are many more leaders of decency and dignity in the world; that the current moment we are in is not normal; that there are people of integrity ready to step into public leadership.

At Shir Tikvah—this intrepid band of the descendants of former slaves in Egypt—we are a group of moral leaders setting forth as a model of justice, compassion, and integrity. Let us lift up the work of our leaders and pray as they move forth, they continue to do their work centered in a Torah of vision, humility, and love. We must show them our deepest gratitude for this immense project of leading us bravely into Shir Tikvah's future. And together, in the great expanse of the unprovable, we'll figure out where to land and live into our boldest dreams and visions.