

All,

For many of us, racial justice work must include work on ourselves and our own ways of seeing and being, work we should not ask others to do for us. Our Judaism calls us to do this work. Shir Tikvah has signed [this statement](#), along with more than 500 Jewish organizations, because Black Lives Matter. And it has been an honor to welcome Black Jewish leaders like [Yavilah McCoy](#) (June 2019) and Black teachers like [Eric Ward](#) (February 2020) to [drash](#) at Shir Tikvah. But we are called to do more than sign statements or wait for opportunities to come our way; we are called to seek out learning and self-reflection.

Former Minnesota Department of Human Rights Commissioner Kevin Lindsey is now at the [Minnesota Humanities Center](#) while his former employer is [suing the Minneapolis Police Department](#). In late May, [he wrote](#) that we “need to confront the problem of racism in the United States. If we sincerely wish to create a great democracy, we must honestly examine our past, confront the problems before us, and boldly declare and take action to create a new reality that is truly inclusive for all.” I have always appreciated learning American history but it seems ever more urgent now. My podcast consumption has gone way up and here are three I’ve learned from.

There’s [BackStory](#), from the Virginia Institute for the Humanities. It is hosted by a racially diverse panel of historians who interview other historians. This 2018 [episode](#) is about how Americans remember and reckon with systemic violence. It features [Kidada Williams](#) reading and contextualizing letters from Gainer Atkins as he sought justice for his son, who was lynched in Davisboro, Georgia, and a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. This 2019 [episode](#) explores the case for reparations.

NPR’s [CodeSwitch](#) is a series of conversations looking at race as it shows up in history, sports, pop culture, literature, art, etc. It is hosted by a cast of journalists of color and, in my experience, lives up to its claim to be “the fearless conversations about race that you've been waiting for.”

I’ve learned a lot from the [Scene on Radio](#) podcast from the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. [Season 2](#), “Seeing White,” with host [John Biewen](#) and collaborator [Chenjerai Kumanyika](#), is an exploration of the history and meaning of whiteness. [The current season](#), with the same team in charge, explores the “the land that never has been yet,” [a title inspired by Langston Hughes](#); it is a devastating and true history of our country.

Thank you to members of Shir Tikvah’s Racial Justice Task Force for assembling [this pocket guide](#) of teachings and resources.

Woohoo!

July 1, 2020 marks the beginning of Rabbi Latz’s 12th year as a rabbi here at Shir Tikvah. *Mazal Tov!*

If you have not already, please email Alison Olig your pledge commitment for 2020-21, or ask her any questions about it. If you have not yet gone to a monthly draw, please consider doing so; a scheduled draw reduces our fees and makes our income predictable. Your pledges make what Shir Tikvah does possible and they are part of your act of creation of our community.

Board updates

Thank you to everyone who attended our first Zoom annual meeting. Your attendance figures crushed the by-laws threshold! It was wonderful to see so many faces. With the start of our new fiscal year, we welcome Tovah Domenick, Howard Orenstein, and Abbie Shain to the Board, and we welcome Lyonel Norris to the Executive Committee.

As I look back on the last 12 months of Board work, I want to express my gratitude to my fellow board members and congregational volunteers who have worked so hard to keep Shir Tikvah moving forward. We are a congregation that, when we worshiped in person, opened its doors every Friday night to carry our singing to the world, to let the world into our hearts, to recognize that we are in and of the world. 2020 has been a dumpster fire of a year so far (a term that [gained currency in 2016](#) and [entered the dictionary in 2018](#)). When I say that Shir Tikvah has had a good year all things considered, it is with full acknowledgement of just how difficult a year this has been for people and causes and things we all care about. Still, the Board and volunteers have made music and *spiel'd* and begun to redesign education and improved external communications and paced the perimeter and raised money and worked on our facilities and supported sanctuary and connected through the Internet (thereby welcoming in congregants who could not otherwise have been with us in person) and raised challenging questions and continued to look for answers. Thanks to all.

High Holy Days

In these trying times, Shir Tikvah will engage you in services that we hope are inspiring, nourishing, joyous, and transformative, worship which holds the work of personal and communal *t'shuvah*—reflecting on what has happened in the last year and committing ourselves to doing better in the year to come. I am thankful for the amazing work of our rabbinical team as they develop an experience that is beautiful and grounded in our Judaism and I'm pleased that this year's worship will also be safe and accessible no matter your health situation. Watch your snail mail for more information.

Youth Education: Big Dreams & Moral Imagination

It is my pleasure to inform you that the Louis Herman Memorial Fund, a designated fund of the Jewish Community Foundation of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation, has approved a grant in the amount of \$20,000 to Shir Tikvah for the Jewish Moral Imagination program, that dreaming work some of our lay and professional leaders have been doing about invigorating our youth education program. This grant will allow Shir Tikvah to put additional professional intellectual muscle into this effort and we are grateful for the Foundation's recognition that what we could do here could help change the supplemental school education landscape. A big thank you to the grant writing team of staff Rabbi Latz, Alison Olig, Forrest Yesnes and lay volunteers Dana Bennis, Tricia Cornell, Jackie Krammer, and Melissa Machovsky, and a big thank you to the whole education design committee.

This is also a great time to announce that we have signed Forrest Yesnes to a long-term contract! Forrest shares these words:

"For five years, we have seen record-breaking growth in our school enrollment, and at the same time heard a demand for more meaningful, more inclusive, more joyous Jewish learning and engagement. Certainly this current moment, in so many ways, has brought us all into new understandings of what truly matters. I am honored to both be part of the team that ushers our students into this ever-changing world, and of course to learn from what they have to tell us as well. As we center the next chapter of our community's learning around

[Jewish Moral Imagination](#), I am also moved to share that I have begun to pursue a [Master of Arts in Jewish Education from Hebrew Union College](#) - Jewish Institute of Religion. The program, designed for working professionals, supplements and inspires my portfolio at Shir Tikvah. If my first course is any indicator, we are all in for a treat; I so look forward to sharing with you what I am learning.”

We have built time into Forrest’s schedule to support his professional development.

Minnehaha Creek updates

The Park Board has released the draft master plan for Minnehaha Creek. You can read it [here](#). Shir Tikvah’s little section of the waterway is given in-depth treatment on page 20. If/when this comes to pass, the community center we currently rent for some classrooms (when we teach in person), and the turn-around/waiting area many people use for drop-off, will be gone. The community center will be replaced, kitty-corner, but we can’t say anything at this point about what it will contain, whether we could rent it, or how long we might be without space we could rent.

As always, feel free to contact me.

In hope,
Bruce

