

All,

Perhaps you are already familiar with the ridiculously talented [Batya Levine](#). Shir Tikvah has sung one of her arrangements, *We Rise*, for a few years now. About the song, Ms. Levine writes “This song came through right after the 2016 election. It was a moment of deep fear and despair, as we watched a campaign built on white supremacy and racism win.... I needed to believe that collective power and resistance was possible in the face of such great unknown. I reached inward for a prayer, for a shred of hope, and what I found was the powerful and prayerful resistance I had witnessed and experienced at [Standing Rock](#). In that moment, I started to sing, praying into my bones that vision of holy resistance.”

We are about to pass over the one-year anniversary of our shuttered building and into Pesach, the first major repeated holiday in these COVID-infected times. We still sit with the “deep fear and despair” Ms. Levine described; [water protectors](#) are still on the ground. Collective power and resistance to injustice remain ever vital for our survival and growth. In March 2020, just a few weeks before physical isolation and masks took hold, Ms. Levine and a beaute of an ensemble recorded *We Rise* and you can be (blown away, lifted up, carried forward, all of the above) buy it [here](#). She’s also released her first album: get it [here](#).

In hope, in prayer, we’re right here.

### **Building closure**

Whether you needed that link to get all the feels about singing together in person, or are longing without prompting from me, please know that we have asked several medical professionals with relevant experience to join Rabbi Latz, Executive Director Alison Olig and I, along with the Board, in thinking about how we approach re-opening. Closing the building—a year ago this month—was a painful decision and not a decision Rabbi Latz, Alison and I took lightly. But it was, ultimately, not that complicated. Jewish teachings about care, community responsibility, and respect for science were in harmony. Reopening the building, or allowing certain in-person gatherings, as we build ([Baruch hashem](#)) toward a COVID-safe world, will be more complicated. Thank you to congregants Natalie Doll, Steve Stovitz, Kara Pacala (and board member Ben Goldfarb, who will be lending his organizational acumen) for helping us think about what comes next in a healthy and loving Jewish way. We’re sailing in new waters; as Rabbi Latz quipped, “They didn’t have a class in seminary on how to re-open a *shul* after a year of global pandemic.”

Even as some of us are getting vaccinated and the shore may be in sight, the seas are still choppy, and this past year will have lasting effects. 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.

I also want you to know that here, in March, our clergy and staff are already planning for the High Holy Days. So far, I can state with clarity that wherever the pandemic might be, we do intend to make sure there is remote access.

## **Bylaws-palooza!**

An amended and restated bylaws proposal has been unanimously approved by the board for your ultimate consideration and approval. Last week's board meeting marks the end of a year's effort to update and modernize our legal framework document—and that's just the first step! The second step is bringing the document to the congregation and, I hope, approving these bylaws at our annual meeting on June 6th. Thank you to Amy Funk and Howard Orenstein as our leads, and to Gay Greiter, Lille Benowitz, MJ Gilbert, Gayle Zoffer and the entire board who asked the three of us tough questions, made proposals, and made sure that the amended and restated bylaws shine with Shir Tikvah's values while modernizing our organization after 30 years of growth. More to come—including opportunities to review and ask questions well in advance—but feel free to [contact me](#) now if you've got thoughts on this subject!

You will see an email soon about voting to amend just one sentence of our bylaws for a limited purpose: to allow the 2021 annual meeting to happen remotely. Please participate; we can't do this without you. And, if the entire amended and restated bylaws are approved in June, this will be the last time we need to!

## **A talk you might have missed and a talk you shouldn't miss**

On March 3rd, Shir Tikvah and many local organizations, supported by the Redleaf Foundation, presented a talk and teaching from [Integrity for America](#), a public law firm that is suing, among others, the white nationalists who killed [Heather Heyer](#) in Charlottesville. If you missed the talk, you can find it [here](#).

I want to highlight a talk by my dear friend Dr. Christina Farhart, who we are welcoming to Shir Tikvah on Wednesday, March 31st at 7pm for a Zoom conversation about Antisemitism and Political Conspiracies. You can read about Dr. Farhart [here](#). She's an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Carleton and an expert on political conspiracy theories. It is a discipline relevant today and likely to be so in the future. (I'm genuinely concerned that my whimsical "Jew-Anon" Purim spiel concept might still be relevant next year.)

## **A thank you to the Minneapolis Jewish Federation**

Shortly after the start of the pandemic, the Minneapolis Jewish Federation launched the [Kadima](#) ("Forward") emergency fundraising campaign to support Jewish agencies in Minneapolis and the western suburbs. Shir Tikvah has been supported by Kadima on three occasions this year. In the spring and summer, Kadima funded the costs associated with our rapid transition to Zoom and some of the costs associated with our re-made High Holy Days. At the end of December, Alison Olig, ace finance staffer Courtney Nguyen, Rabbi Latz and I submitted a third grant request. We have just learned that the Federation has granted us \$72,100 of additional support. Part of those funds are intended to continue to support the Jewish Academy for Moral Imagination (our school) through its first year. We are grateful to Federation for their continued investment in Shir Tikvah and the broad and amazing community that we are!

## **Connect with congregants!**

Get your updated Shir Tikvah Directory! If you have a paper copy that's been sitting around at home, it's likely out of date. Please email [Sara Lahyani](#) for a new electronic copy! Please note, the directory is for social, not commercial, purposes.

I'd love to include you and your houseplants, children, pets, hobbies, quirks, etc. in the next letter. Please [contact me](#)!

Ruth Hampton Olkon and David Olkon say hello from the Prospect Park neighborhood in Minneapolis.

“Ruth is a long-time member of Shir Tikvah. David joined the community when they married in 2004. Yossi is 14, 9th grade, Twins Zev and Shoshana are 11, in 6th grade in Minneapolis Public Schools. The kids are active in Shir Tikvah religious school and the Stifty Youth Group—although they *really* wish it was in person and not on Zoom! Ruth very much misses her time serving coffee and bagels during Sunday religious school and hopes to have the opportunity to serve again as a bagel lady in the future! Ruth is also the CEO of [Jewish Family Service of St. Paul](#) which provides social services to the Jewish and greater community. The picture is from June 2019 of Yossi's Bar Mitzvah—a wonderful experience for him and the entire family.”



Elaine Rudick writes “Jerry and I became members of Shir Tikvah in 2012. We had moved to Minneapolis from Youngstown, Ohio. Jerry had just sold his business and our children were here. We explored some other synagogues for a while and joined a congregation. When we attended Shabbat Services at Shir Tikvah for the first time, we knew that this was the congregation for us. The Services are meaningful and thought-provoking. We have found the dedication to and involvement in social action to be inspiring and motivating, even more so in this time of extreme turmoil. I’ve experienced many excellent classes with all of our rabbis. Each one has his/her own specialness. We’ve had the opportunity to work with really good people on various committees and projects. We went on a wonderful trip to Israel with Rabbi Latz as our amazing guide and a great group of fellow travelers. We've made some lasting friendships with folks on the trip. The virtual Services are really special. We were gratified and amazed with the High Holiday Services in the Cloud. I think you get the idea that we appreciate Shir Tikvah. Thank you, Shir Tikvah!”

**ELAINE  
AND  
JERRY  
RUDICK**



Feel free to drop me a [line](#).

Bruce

