

June 2020

Dear Kehillah Community,

To say the past year has been "interesting" would be an understatement. For the most part, at least until COVID-19 struck, we were having an excellent year. Good community involvement, some new programming and a successful fundraiser. We were able to make some security improvements to our building thanks to a grant from the Department of Homeland Security and we recently applied to DHS for funds another grant to cover our on-site security plus additional funds to significantly upgrade our security camera system. We also took steps to upgrade our accounting and budgeting as we prepared for 2020. Our objectives were simple - upgrade wherever possible both institutionally and programmatically.

Now instead of recounting how COVID rocked our world, I would like to recognize how quickly our wonderful Rabbi, Renee and the Board of Directors took immediate steps to transition literally every aspect of Kehillah to a digital environment. The amount of work and the time pressures were incredible. One week we're meeting in person and two weeks later we're using something called Zoom. Equally praiseworthy was the way Zoom was adopted and embraced by our community. We were the first congregation in the Valley to go fully digital and I'm proud of everyone for their efforts and participation. Rabbi recognized that during the period of physical distancing, our community members were looking for additional ways to connect and push back the inevitable feelings of isolation. Her selfless response to the situation was to increase the number of programs offered and we plan to continue our Kabbalat Shabbat services and many of our programs through the summer!

Looking back, it's hard to believe how our community has adjusted and evolved. There, however, will be new challenges this coming year. Of primary interest to all is when and how we will reopen our building. We've formed a multi-disciplinary COVID Task Force to assure that best practices are observed. Even if it is declared "safe" to occupy our building, we must keep the best interests of all of our congregants in mind, particularly our "at-risk" congregants. As for the High Holy Days, Rabbi jokes that she has 6.5 (and counting) plans for the HHDs. Each alternative will be explored, but caution will be the byword. We will keep you posted throughout the summer.

On a personal note, I'm energized by the resilience of our community. Challenging times like these are telling, but our community has embraced the challenge and grown stronger with continued participation and enthusiasm. We must maintain this momentum and we enter our new fiscal year which begins July 1st. It is time to renew your membership and Kehillah's very survival depends on your continued support. You will notice that the board voted to not increase the dues this year. We also recognize that the financial commitment may be difficult for some and we can work together, as we always have, to develop a financial plan that will take your cash flow needs into consideration. For those who can, I'm asking you to consider increasing your financial commitment to Kehillah. The upcoming year is critical for Kehillah and, as a small congregation, we have precious little room for a financial shortfall.

Yes, the upcoming year will be different and, in some respects, challenging but I'm confident that with your help and participation we can make it another successful year.