

Good evening and thank you. I am pleased to deliver the Education Report as your Director of Religious Education

Thank you to the Hamilton Jewish Federation for the continued support of our Religious School and Educational Programming that we deliver at Temple Anshe Sholom. Please note that it is through generous donations of Temple members to the Hamilton Jewish Federation campaign that we are able to benefit from the financial support of Hamilton Jewish Federation.

This year, as we suddenly shut down after March Break, every member of the education working group, was engaged in many, many more meetings than our usual once a month, and continue to provide guidance and parent input as we planned over this summer. I offer a very heartfelt thank you for the many, many efforts of the Education Working Group; Chair- Joanne Warren, Members- Rhonda Dahan, Donna Sampson, Paula Korman, Karen Sniderman, Gillian Burman, Carrie Sniderman and Alyssa Sampson.

Before we closed our physical doors, we held a very successful fundraiser, which served to remember and celebrate the memory of our Teacher and friend Ellen Hoffman. One Hundred seats were filled with parents, grandparents and children dancing and singing with the wonderful duo, Jack & Cosima Grunsky. Thank you to all who generously supported our special event.

Then came the moment where March Break turned into an indefinite closure of our physical doors. However, our students did not miss any classes or learning time, as we very quickly shifted to an online learning classroom. We continued offering classes for Kindergarten through Grade 9 every Shabbat morning online, as well as small group and one to one Hebrew & Judaica classes on Wednesday Afternoons. I cannot say enough wonderful things about the fantastic teaching staff at Temple. All of our staff stepped up into a very unfamiliar environment to continue to deliver Hebrew lessons, Judaica activities and small group gatherings in our new Zoom Classrooms. Weekly family lessons were also provided to keep our students engaging with Judaism in their home. Thank you to Rebecca Sampson our Music and Arts specialist, Ellen Orgel, our Primary class teacher, and Sonja Botnick Hebrew Teacher, all of whom are returning to the Virtual Classrooms this year. This year, Rabbi Cohen will be instructing our confirmation class on Shabbat mornings, and Cantor Baruch will take on the B'nai Mitzvah instruction. I

also have to thank Rabbi Tepper for creating an interactive and engaging class for our Junior and Senior students this past year and wish him well the coming year.

Singing, Food, Dancing and Hands-on Learning with Friends. These are the activities that make learning at Temple Anshe Sholom fun, keep students excited to attend classes each week, and create lasting memories that become a piece of a child's Jewish Identity. In this time and space, where the worry of Covid-19 transmission is weighing on us all, including our anxious children, our Education Working Group quickly realized that these were activities that could not be continued safely and whole-heartedly in close-proximity to each other. Not while students and families are worried about their day to day activities and interactions in their secular schools. However, we also decided that we can continue to sing, cook, eat, dance and learn together in a virtual learning space. This is the direction we are moving in this year. This year, we are striving to create a safe "virtual building"; a *kehila* of many virtual homes and families, who are learning, schmoozing, singing, and praying together twice a week. Our students and teachers will be meeting in virtual classrooms to learn together, with the goal of face-to-face learning opportunities in small groups when it is safe and when we are ready. Our families will be provided with monthly learning packages (containing art materials, resources and fun surprises) to bring our classroom right into their homes, and to ensure that all students can fully participate in activities with the proper supplies. Families with children age 1-4 are invited to begin Shabbat morning as we continue to offer our drop-in Tot-Shabbat; songs, stories and Shabbat fun with me every Saturday at 9am!

For School age children, our Shabbat morning will begin with singing together in our homes at 9:20am, providing a wonderful opportunity for parents and students to gather in our Zoom Room, sing, shmooze, and spend Shabbat together. As Saturday morning continues, students will have several opportunities to learn in one of our five Zoom Classrooms, as well as classes on Wednesday afternoons. It will be different, and our goal is to return to in-person learning when it is safe and appropriate to do so, but an aspect of virtual learning will remain. Change is ok and sometimes that change makes us a stronger and closer community. In this case, when we moved to a virtual space during the complete shut-down of schools, we heard from several families, who struggle to attend programs for medical or distance reasons, that virtual programs have opened doors to learning opportunities that they have never had before. We have 4 new students starting in September that have suddenly had the barriers to access our school program removed. When we return to the physical classroom, we cannot close our virtual doors

on these families. This year has brought much uncertainty and many changes, but at Temple Anshe Sholom our engaging programs and style of learning will continue, though our space has changed. Our learning space has become more open, more accessible, more welcoming, and we will continue to change and adapt as our program of Jewish learning evolves and morphs throughout the years to come.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur will also be different this year. This year we will continue to make family connections and explore Jewish learning in a virtual space, from the safety and comfort of our homes. I am especially excited about our new Erev Rosh Hashana Prayers & Blessings and Erev Yom Kippur PJ's & Prayers, both for families with young children to prepare for the Holy Days together! I invite you to join our learning adventure, all are welcome! I invite you to please support of Education programming through our Shana Tovah Flower Fundraiser. Consider sending flowers to family and friends to wish them a healthy and happy New Year! The last day to order a beautiful Flower arrangement for Rosh Hashana is tomorrow and all information can be found on the Temple Website.

Developments in 2019-2020

Building on the success of the changes introduced in 2018-2019

- **Families in the Forest:** This year we started a monthly "outdoor learning" family service to our Shabbat morning program. Activities included; A Blessing Walk, A Rainbow of Thanks, Shabbat in the Hut, Give thanks to the Trees, and Be a Leader like Moshe
- **Wednesday Judaism Through the Arts:** We know that research indicates that one of the most impactful experiences on Jewish Identity is summer camp. So, we wanted to bring a piece of summer camp to our weekly Wednesday religious school sessions. For the second year, our students spent 4-6 week blocks studying Torah & Traditions through various arts activities. For example, students spent 4 sessions in the kitchen learning Jewish Cooking, 6 sessions exploring weekly parashot through visual art, drama and dance. A highlight this year, was the involvement of Laura Wolfson and new Community member Monica Matei. Together, they taught our students about the various meanings and symbolism of "Eitz Chayim". Students worked over 4 weeks to create a beautiful Eitz Chayim Mosaic to allow lasting understanding through display of their art in their home. We have also learned through musical theatre, outdoor exploration and music. Students also rotate through Hebrew Through Movement, where they learn to understand and read Hebrew through whole language, games and kinesthetic learning.

- **B'yachad G'milut Chasidim Project:** This year we shifted our high-school program to Shabbat Morning, as the majority of our students were unable to attend on Wednesday evenings. Our Grade 8 students studied with their teacher, Rabbi Tepper, with a curriculum focus of community involvement, tzedakah and taking action. The students were given the assignment to create and execute a mitzvah project in the community. They chose to make beautiful challah covers, create Shabbat Shalom cards and bake challot. Then, on one Shabbat morning, they went out into the community and visited 6 seniors at their homes, the majority of whom do not receive many regular visitors. One resident was resistant to the visit, but cried tears of happiness when the students had to leave because she was so touched by the gift of challah and company.
- **Ellen Hoffman Memorial Concert:** this year we marked the first yartzeit of Ellen Hoffman (z"l) with a Family Concert. This was a beautiful way to remember our friend and former teacher of our Religious school. Performers Jack & Cosima Grunsky entertained 100 guests with songs about caring for the each other, respect, self-worth and caring for the earth. This was also a major fundraiser for our school, raising funds for our school plus \$360 for Food4Kids.
- **Weekly Family Dinners and Healthy Pre-class Snack:** We have maintained and expanded our two nutrition/social programs as part of our Wednesday sessions
 - 1) We now start our program at 4pm and offer a healthy snack (fully sponsored by an anonymous Temple member). This has eliminated the rush to get to school.
 - 2) We offer a Family Dinner option EVERY Wednesday at 6:15. This continues to be a highlight of the week and has brought many families together. Our new families have said it has been a great to feel so welcomed into the school community, giving families a weekly opportunity to connect socially.
- **Maintained our enrollment** in Religious school, and continue to increase the number of children that access our outreach drop-in programs. Our K-1 enrollment continues to grow. This year we have 10 students in this age group attending.
- **Co-Hosted a very successful Chanukah at Shalom Village program.** Together with Beth Jacob, we prepared songs and poems about love and caring for our senior family, and performed these for residents. We followed our performance with multi-generational games of dreidle and socializing with together. This was a highlight of my year!
- Coordinated and led a well-attended, (Temple Anshe Sholom & Beth Jacob) Tu B'shevat learning field trip to the RBG trail at Cootes Paradise. Students participate in a Torah Study tree walk, made 3D trees with found materials and labeled the [arts of the tree in Hebrew.

- Hosted a Chanukah Crafts and Movie Day, with stories, songs and crafts. This was attended by 15 children age 3-10, with participants from all 3 synagogue communities.
- Cantor Paula Baruch led students in a 4 week musical theatre session, teaching about Purim and leading up to student involvement in our Temple Purim shpiel.
- We planned an Adult/Family education program “What is Passover?” to engage families who had questions, were leading a seder for the first time, are new to Judaism, or are not Jewish but have Jewish family and want understanding to build stronger family connections. Unfortunately, this was postponed to next year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Engaged Families in 4 ‘Whole School Family Learning Programs’ including; Family Torah study and activities for Rosh Hashanah, 1 Shalom Village Visits, and an outdoor Tu B’Shevat education program.
- Involved our students in creating Matanat l’evyonim bags for Homeless individuals. After Torah Study with Rabbi Tepper, about helping those in need, our students packed 40 zip bags with socks, granola bars, toothbrushes, toothpaste, cloths, soap and a bottle of water. Each family left with 1 bag to keep in the car, so they can readily help struggling individuals that they pass while driving in their car. The remaining bags were left out for congregants to take at our Purim service, so they can distribute the bags to those in need in our community.
- Continue to integrate our Kindergarten and grade 1 students into our Wednesday session. This continues to be very positively received by families, which is reflected in regular attendance of our youngest students
- Involved our high school youth in the facilitation of YoFi Shabbat and in Tot Shabbat programming
- Participated in joint learning activities about Yom Kippur hosted by Beth Jacob.

Thank you so much and Shana Tovah!

Dora-Ann