

April 24, 2019

Dear Friends,

I hope everyone had the joy of spending time with loved ones over the past couple of days. Charles and I headed down to Greensboro, NC for the weekend to celebrate Pesach with our daughter, son-in-law and grandsons, Jesse and Tobias. It was a wonderful visit!

Last year was a difficult one and we, as a congregation, came together to make incredibly difficult and painful decisions. I am thankful that we are on the path of healing and hope. Your leadership team has been hard at work, continuing to focus on both the short-term and long-term future of our beloved congregation.

As we prepare for a Town Hall meeting this Sunday at 9:30 am in Greenebaum Sanctuary to hear from the Oheb Shalom members of the Joint Task Force exploring a merger with Har Sinai, I write to update you on a number of questions that may be on your mind about Temple Oheb Shalom today.

Our Financial Oversight and Sustainability Team is meeting regularly to determine a path forward based upon our current membership. They, together with Executive Director Ken Davidson, are preparing to present an FY20 budget to our board in just a few weeks. We look forward to sharing the final, approved budget with you this summer.

If you haven't already, I hope you will take a few minutes to read the recent Jewish Times article featuring our very own Rabbi Disick ([click here](#)). Rabbi Disick has been a wonderful presence in our congregation during our difficult transition. I am excited and proud that our Board chose to renew Rabbi Disick's contract for a second year, keeping him in Baltimore through June 2020.

With Rabbi Marion's upcoming departure and the continued absence of a full-time cantor, our shift in clergy situation may be uncomfortable for many. Your lay and professional leadership are working together to map out how we will meet the needs of our congregation over the next twelve months. Rabbi Disick is scheduled to assist with every Bar/Bat Mitzvah in 2020, and our incredible cantorial soloists, Leslie Pomerantz and Melinda McGlothlin, as well as Laya Friedman, will continue to provide us beautiful, spiritual music for our worship.

Our plan is to first search for a permanent, or "settled" rabbi (as they are officially known in our Reform movement) before deciding on any additional full-time clergy. Given our current size, it is unlikely that we would be able to afford two full-time rabbis and a full-time cantor. The next opportunity to enter into the search process for a "settled" rabbi would be this fall to hire a candidate who would begin in the summer of 2020. All search processes would include ample opportunity for congregational input and involvement.

As I learned recently at a gathering of temple presidents from throughout the country, evolving trends are all around us. We must change too, as the model that has sustained us and so many other congregations is rapidly becoming more difficult to maintain. And, with change, comes many exciting

new opportunities. As Rabbis Berlin and Herman wrote in the letter last week, "Continuing change is the constant to which Jews have always responded through our history in order to survive."

Over the past several months, Har Sinai Congregation and Temple Oheb Shalom's Joint Task Force have worked diligently to explore the possibility of combining our two historic congregations on one path for our shared future. The TOS members of the Joint Task Force have repeatedly sought input and advice from our Board and are now eager to share with you why they believe that combining with Har Sinai would be in the best long-term interest of our congregation.

We are eager for your input. I urge you please plan to attend the JTF's upcoming Town Hall meeting, Sunday, April 28th, at 9:30am in the Greenebaum Sanctuary. If you are unable to attend on April 28th, please look for additional meeting dates or contact a member of the JTF to make other arrangements. A healthy process depends on congregational participation so please plan to be involved.

It is a privilege to serve as your President and I am inspired by the important work ahead. Together we can create a Kehillah Kedoshah, a holy community, for generations to come. Thank you for your ongoing trust, friendship and partnership.

B'Shalom,

Vicki Spira