



Congregation Emanu El

Bulletin

August 4, 2020 | 14 Av 5780

VOLUME 74 NUMBER 11

EDITOR'S NOTE ABOUT THIS BULLETIN

As of the print deadline for this edition of the *Bulletin*, all programs, services and meetings of the synagogue have been moved to electronic platforms, postponed or canceled **until futher notice**. To clarify the status of events and gatherings at Emanu El, please visit our website at emanuelhouston.org, call the synagogue at 713.529.5771 or email Jason Plotkin at jasonp@emanuelhouston.org.

FROM RABBI HAYON



Repentance, Prayer & Charity

One of the most recognizable elements of the High Holy Day liturgy is the powerful *Unetaneh Tokef* prayer, whose haunting melody and words ask the chilling question: “*Who shall live and who shall die?*”

The prayer culminates with a familiar refrain, designed to bring some comfort to the worshiper, which assures us that “repentance, prayer, and charity avert the severity of the decree.”

Each of these three elements – repentance, prayer, and charity – form the backbone of the spiritual work we are called to do during the Days of Awe. This year, although the spiritual needs of our day are greater than ever, each of these three remedies will be made more difficult because of the realities of life during a pandemic.

Repentance, which requires direct and open interpersonal contact, is hobbled by our inability to connect face-to-face with others and apologize for the harm we have done to them. Prayer, which is built on the moving experience of communal worship, will be undertaken this year in our own homes, away from the stirring and inspiring

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I write this, it's mid-July and many of us have canceled, postponed or reworked our summer plans due to rising levels of coronavirus cases. Here in Houston, July marks the fourth month of the pandemic. After four months of managing new lifestyles and schedules, I continue to be impressed by the creative ways our community members have filled their days. Baking challah (and bagels and rugelach!) thanks to the Modern Jewish Baker Challenge. Painting fence art. Learning a TikTok dance with your kids or grandkids. Socializing on Zoom.

Our temple staff and volunteers have also been flexing their creativity

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Jeri Armundsen

An Update on Emanu El's Reopening

The below letter was sent to the Congregation via mail and post-dated on July 17. Additional information and updates can be found on our website at emanuelhouston.org/reopening2020. Those unable to access the website are encouraged to e-mail David Lamden at davidl@emanuelhouston.org for a printed copy.

Dear Friends,

As a follow up to our June communication regarding the High Holy Days (available online at emanuelhouston.org/hhdworship), we want to share with you our plans for gradually reopening our building as safely as possible.

Earlier this summer, we set up a task force to assemble our congregational plan. The task force is made up of congregants and staff with expertise in the medical, administrative, and human resource areas. After two months of research and deliberation, we are pleased to share these highlights with you.

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TENTATIVE WORSHIP SERVICES

Please note that this schedule was created with the intention of being back in the building. The rooms listed are the "location" of where the services are being streamed from for those seeking access on our web site. Any changes will be shared via the regular synagogue communications.

Services will continue to be made available on our website (via streaming video), Congregation Emanu El Facebook and Roku. Additionally, archives are typically posted within 24 hours to our YouTube channel.

Shabbat Eikev, Deuteronomy 7:12 – 11:25 **Friday, August 7**

6:00 p.m., Kabbalat Shabbat, Proler Chapel

Saturday, August 8

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Proler Chapel

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Barish Sanctuary

B'nei Mitzvah of **Benjamin & Hannah Turner**, children of Rachael Tobor & Valerie Turner

Shabbat R'eih, Deuteronomy 11:26 – 16:17 **Friday, August 14**

6:00 p.m., Kabbalat Shabbat, Proler Chapel

Saturday, August 15

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Proler Chapel

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Barish Sanctuary

Bat Mitzvah of **Avi Hayon**, daughter of Julie & Rabbi Oren Hayon

Shabbat Shof'tim, Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9 **Friday, August 21**

6:00 p.m., Kabbalat Shabbat, Proler Chapel

Saturday, August 22

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Proler Chapel

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Barish Sanctuary

B'nei Mitzvah of **Dean Mills**, son of Ashley Mills & Garrett Hartman & **Ashley Mills**, daughter of Kathy & Joe Mills

Shabbat Ki Teitzei, Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19 **Friday, August 28**

6:00 p.m., Kabbalat Shabbat, Proler Chapel

Saturday, August 29

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Proler Chapel

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Barish Sanctuary

B'not Mitzvah of **Adrienne Smith**, daughter of Emily Jones & Michael Smith and **Emily Jones**, daughter of Mindy & Steve Herrick, Rosie & Mike Jones

Shabbat Ki Tavo, Deuteronomy 26:1 – 29:8 **Friday, September 4**

6:00 p.m., Kabbalat Shabbat, Proler Chapel

Saturday, September 5

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Proler Chapel

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Barish Sanctuary

B'not Mitzvah of **Sophie Rose Kauffman**, daughter of Julie Kauffman and **Sarah Poth Lack**, daughter of Jill & Josh Lack

Shabbat Nitzavim – Vayeilech, **Deuteronomy 29:9 – 30:20, 31:1-30** **Friday, September 11**

6:00 p.m., Kabbalat Shabbat, Proler Chapel

Saturday, September 12

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Proler Chapel

10:30 a.m., Morning Service, Barish Sanctuary

B'nei Mitzvah of **Sammy Barron**, son of Caryn & Matt Barron and **Emonni Caouette**, daughter of Dawn Arouty & Rick Caouette

FROM RABBI HAYON *continued from page 1*

presence of hundreds of our fellow worshipers reading, singing, and praying around us. And charity, the gift of our material resources to support the needs of others, requires even more sacrifice in these days when so many jobs, salaries, and household budgets have been affected by COVID-19.

Nevertheless, all three of these gestures of renewal will be vital for us to take on this year, perhaps even more than ever. It is not too early for us to begin preparing for this unprecedented holiday season. Now is the time for us to plan to take the necessary steps to apologize to those we have wronged. Let us make our preparations now for the spaces in our homes where we will participate in worship services, so we can surround ourselves with meaningful family photos, mementos, and flowers. And let us redouble our commitments to charitable giving, including the generosity we show in support of our spiritual home at Emanu El.

As you will read in Jeri Amundsen's article, the Board of Trustees recently adopted the recommendation of the Finance and Executive Committees, who advised that we take decisive, preemptive steps during the present uncertain economic climate to preserve the congregation's financial well-being. Among the cost-cutting measures we have adopted is a broad set of salary reductions, which includes the compensation of clergy, administration and other members of our full-time staff. The decision to reduce staff salaries was a dramatic and painful measure, but I joined our lay leadership in endorsing it. I did so because the obligation to support our congregation falls to all of us, members and staff alike, and all of us must do what we can to share the load. I am proud of our professional leadership and their generous willingness to roll up their sleeves and step into the hard and holy work of supporting the financial sustainability of our congregation, now and in perpetuity.

But the sacrifices made by our professional staff cannot be the only measure undertaken to ensure the stable future of Congregation Emanu El. It is my hopeful expectation that everyone who makes their spiritual home in this congregation will respond to our tradition's call to give tzedakah generously at this season. If all of us do our part to support of the mission and good work of Emanu El, I am confident that we will "avert the severity of the decree," and ensure that this holy congregation will remain strong and sustainable in every generation that will follow ours.

AN UPDATE ON EMANU EL'S REOPENING

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The Reopening Plan Includes:

- Four phases through which our building will gradually reopen to increasingly larger numbers of congregants and staff for gathering including: worship, office/administration, adult education, and meetings.
- Current Phase 1 status (limited staff onsite at any given time, with other activities such as worship services taking place online) will move forward to Phases 2 – 4 upon meeting the two measures (described below) on the tmc.edu website.
- Two measures required for moving forward, from one phase to the next: downward trends in (1) the numbers of new hospital admissions, and (2) percentage of COVID tests with positive results.

Reopening Plan Guiding Principles:

- Stay true to the “Emanu El way” by prioritizing the health and safety of our members, while ensuring that solutions will be fair, accessible, and equitable to all Emanu El congregants.
- Minimize risk while accepting that no plan will completely eliminate all possible risks.
- Ensure everyone who enters Emanu El remains as safe as possible. There will be mandatory rules (e.g. wearing masks, wellness screenings, social distancing, etc.).
- Closely following advice of medical professionals and organizations (including CDC and institutional bodies of the Reform Movement), elected officials, and government agencies.
- Becker School, Helfman Religious School, and B'nei Mitzvah Reopening Plans are being developed separately and will be communicated to those families.

While further details of the Reopening Plan will be included in future communications, we know that many of you are very interested in two specific areas related to congregational worship:

- Upon entering Phase 2, the clergy will lead services from Emanu El's sacred spaces (barring unforeseen circumstances), while congregants continue to worship virtually.
- During Phase 3, a limited number of congregants will be allowed to attend services in person.

We hope this initial communication provides help, and we are grateful for your partnership and support.

Regards,

Oren J. Hayon, Senior Rabbi
Jeri Amundsen, President
David Larden, Executive Director

LIFECYCLE EVENTS

IN THE COMMUNITY

Lisa Brooks was elected President of the Alumni Association of Franklin & Marshall College. Her two-year term began on July 1.

Our preferred caterers Houston Catering Concepts was named 'Best of the Best' in the category of catering by the *Houston Chronicle*. Our member **Michael Saghian** is the principal owner of Houston Catering Concepts, which includes the New York Deli & Coffee Shop/The Bagel Bakery.

Aliza Plotkin was installed as a national board member of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), an organization that represents over 90,000 members. Aliza is the first Houstonian to serve on the national board of NCJW in over a decade.

BIRTHS

Charles Michael Epstein, son of Rachel & Ryan Epstein; grandson of Susan Friedmann, LaDina & Michael Epstein

DEATHS

Marshall Berkson, father of Ellen Berkson Ecker; grandfather of Lisa Ecker, Amy & Andrew Dodd; great-grandfather of Lyla Dodd

Frederic “Ricky” Blaine Hodgkins, son of Anita & Robb Hodgkins; brother of Robyn Hodgkins

Naman Lipinsky, husband of Esther Lipinsky; father of Pam & John Blumenthal, Sharon & Abie Charski, Sharon & Jay Lipinsky; grandfather of Mindy & Jeff Rosenfeld, Rachel & Todd Charski, Sarah Lipinsky, Rachel & Greg Waldstreicher, Rebecca & Lee Steinfeld, Michelle Blumenthal & Elias Chajet, Jessica & Kegan Blumenthal

Jerome Lipnick, husband of Hope Lipnick; father of Allison & Jamshid Ghajar, Sarah Arnuist & Michael Lipnick; grandfather of five; brother of Janet & Elton Lipnick, Sonya Lipnick

Minash Mayants, husband of Bella Mayants; father of Svetlana & Victor Poretsky, Alexander Mayants; grandfather of Michelle Poretsky, Jenny & Carlos Sanchez, Valeria Mayants

Shella Pryzant Plastrik, mother of Mara Gittess & Jeff Plastrik; Laura & Rory Alter; grandmother of Lindsey and Andrew Alter

David Silverman, brother of Bernard Silverman

A Notice About Bereavement Communications

Bereavement notices for our Temple family are distributed with the permission of the deceased's family, and the timing of these notices is dictated by the family's request. Of course, each family grieves in its own way, and we are grateful for our congregation's patience and understanding with different families' preferences about how their loss is publicized.

Sisterhood News & Happenings

August – September 2020



BOOK REVIEW: *The Song of Jade Lily* by Kirsty Manning

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 7:00 PM

Emanu El's Sisterhood hosts bi-monthly book reviews throughout the year. These book reviews are open to the public. September's book review will be led by our congregant, Marilyn Nathan.

PLEASE NOTE: This book review will be held online via Zoom, and the information to access will be emailed ahead of time to those who register.

In our September book, we'll go to 1939 as two young girls meet in Shanghai: Li Ho, a beautiful, talented Chinese national, and Romy, a Jewish refugee whose family fled Vienna during the Nazi occupation. Li and Romy form a heartfelt friendship that does not survive circumstances arising from the brutal Japanese takeover of Shanghai. Romy ultimately immigrates to Australia, where she marries Wilhelm and adopts a daughter. Fast forward to 2016, when Romy's granddaughter, Alexandra, leaves her job and her lover in London, flies to Australia to be with her grandparents (Romy and Wilhelm), and painstakingly unravels her grandmother's wartime history and her mother's ancestry. Ultimately, Alexandra finds that circumstances wrought by war lead to outcomes as complicated and poignant as the mysterious song of the jade lily.

To help us plan for our book reviews and to receive communications about future book reviews, we ask that you kindly **RSVP by Wednesday, September 9**, either online or by contacting the Sisterhood at sishood@emanuelhouston.org or 713.529.5771, ext. 233.

Sisterhood Schmooze: Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You! Wednesday, August 5, 7:00 p.m.

*As we enter our fifth month of being at home,
Let's get together so we won't feel alone.*

*See old friends, meet some new,
We want to hear from all of you!*

*So put up your feet, pull up a chair,
It doesn't even matter what you wear.*

*Pour some coffee, tea, or wine,
This will be a chance to see our "sisters" shine!*

Our Sisterhood schmooze will be held via Zoom. The information to access will be emailed ahead of time to those who RSVP. Please RSVP to the Sisterhood office at 713.529.5771, ext. 233 or sishood@emanuelhouston.org.

An Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation Mondays, August 10 & 17, 10:00 a.m.

Looking for a way to reduce stress and gain insight and awareness of yourself and others? Join Sisterhood in An Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation as Jan Silver, a certified meditation instructor and wellness and health coach, guides us in a two-part meditation class. Jan is

also a teacher of mindfulness-based stress reduction and leads other meditation groups at Congregation Emanu El.

Jan will conduct the first class on **Monday, August 10** with the second part occurring a week later, on **Monday, August 17**. The class is geared to beginners of meditation and/or those who would like to learn the fundamentals of meditation.

The class will be conducted via Zoom, and there is no charge for it. It will be limited to 12 students, so please RSVP soon to reserve your place. The access information will be emailed ahead of time to those who RSVP to the Sisterhood office at 713.529.5771, ext. 233 or sishood@emanuelhouston.org. If there is sufficient demand for this class, Sisterhood plans to have additional classes in the future.

This is the perfect time to explore meditation and bring more joy and purpose to your life!

Words Change the World Goes Virtual!

Wednesday, August 19,
12:00 p.m. ****NEW TIME****

The Sisterhood is excited to host its annual donor event "Words Change the World" after postponing its



Barbara Pierce Bush

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originally scheduled in-person gathering in March.

The online, virtual event will be available to all attendees with a paid reservation, and each guest will receive a personalized link a few days prior to the event.

The question-and-answer session with Barbara Pierce Bush will take place with attendees having an opportunity to submit questions ahead of time. A few surprises will take place at the start and end of the event – we are keeping them a secret for now!

Sisterhood will donate two books in the name of each attendee – accounting for over 1,000 new children’s books – to the Harris County Public Library’s Curiosity Cruiser.

Other donations include a gift to Bush’s Global Health Corps and, in addition to the lunch boxes gifted by guests, the Sisterhood will be making a financial contribution to Second Servings.

Please note that the deadline for attendees to finalize their arrangements passed at the end of July. Should there be any questions regarding your arrangements,

please contact the Sisterhood directly at 713.529.5771, ext. 233 or sishood@emanuelhouston.org.

Additionally, tickets are still available for the program only at a cost of \$50. To purchase tickets for the program, contacting the Sisterhood office or visit Emanu El’s website at emanuelhouston.org.

Sisterhood Hosts Don’t Fall for a Scam Tuesday, September 1, 10:00 a.m.



Did you know that scam artists are skillful criminals who successfully change their schemes on an ongoing basis to continue to steal money from their victims or that the number of people caught in scams like foreign lotteries and the grandparent scam are increasing every day? Join Sisterhood as Jennifer Salazar of the Better Business Bureau teaches us how not to become a victim.

There is no charge for this event, but please RSVP to the Sisterhood office at 713.529.5771, ext. 233 or sishood@emanuelhouston.org. Log-in information will be sent closer to the presentation date.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE CONGREGATION

Emanu El Votes Launches Survey



Emanu El Votes

Our non-partisan civic engagement initiative, Emanu El Votes, aims to make Emanu El a 100% voting congregation in 2020 and beyond. To focus this effort, please share your thoughts on how we can help you vote safely and accurately in this short survey <https://bit.ly/2B5u0XP>.

The survey does not ask about voting preferences or affiliations, is being conducted in accordance with Rice University’s rigorous Institutional Review Board standards, and results will be tallied confidentially. Thank you for helping to amplify Emanu El’s voice.

If you would like to participate in Emanu El Votes, we encourage you to contact EEVotes@emanuelhouston.org.



Find Us On YouTube!

Looking for a one-stop shop to catch the latest worship services, musical selections, videos from our schools and more while we are separated during COVID-19?

Over 275 videos of new content created since the pandemic have been posted to Emanu El’s YouTube page with dozens and dozens more from the archives also shared.

Find us on YouTube by searching “Emanu El Houston Video” and subscribe today!



Get Social With Us!

Did you know Congregation Emanu El is on Instagram? In addition to our active Facebook pages, be sure to follow us on Instagram to catch snap shots of happenings around the synagogue. From camel sightings to social action, a thriving youth group to clergy in action and more!

Find us on Instagram at www.instagram.com/emanuelhouston or if you are already a member, find us at [@emanuelhouston](https://www.instagram.com/emanuelhouston). And yes, please feel free to “check-in” at Emanu El when you are here for events and happenings!

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AT EMANU EL

The Classics: Let's Bake Challah!

Friday, August 7, 7:30 p.m.

Nothing says Shabbat more than the delicious aroma of freshly baked Challah.

Join Rabbi David Segal and The Classics - Emanu El's social group for those in their 50s and 60s - and learn some tips from this challah baker extraordinaire!

While we can't meet in person, we can gather around our laptops, break bread together, and enjoy each other's company. Recipes will be sent to registrants, along with ideas of innovative and creative toppings and even ways to "stuff" your Challah.

Registration is available online and required by **Wednesday, August 5** to ensure the Zoom information is sent ahead of time.

Questions? Email Fredi Bleeker Franks at fredi.bleeker@gmail.com.

You Matter! Self-Care

Wednesday, August 12, 7:00 p.m.

Many of us are caregivers and would never hesitate to help a friend, family or community member. In fact, it can be more challenging to figure out our own needs and wrestle for time to meet those needs. Human beings do not come with neatly packaged care instructions and we need to care for ourselves to maximize our output. This presentation will teach you the steps to making a robust self-care plan to care for yourself so that we can continue giving our care to others.

Join us on Zoom for this program co-sponsored by Jewish Family Service of Houston and Congregation Emanu El. To help us plan for this event open to the community, we ask that you register in advance of at emanuelhouston.org. A Zoom link and login information will be sent to participants at least 24 hours prior to the event.



Gittel Francis

This presentation will be facilitated by Gittel Francis, LMSW. Francis is part of the Behavioral Mental Health Service team at Jewish Family Service (JFS). In her role as community outreach social worker, Gittel hosts training sessions and lectures on a variety of topics to increase mental health literacy and decrease self-doubt. Gittel is the manager of the Jewish Family Service Mental Health First Aid program and holds the title of National Instructor in Adult and Youth Mental Health First Aid. Gittel can be reached via email at gfrancis@jfshouston.org.

Bat Mitzvah of Avital Hayon, Daughter of Rabbi Oren & Julie Hayon

Saturday, August 15, 10:30 a.m.

Five years ago, the Emanu El community welcomed our family to Houston for the next chapter of our lives together; today, we feel great pride as our daughter Avital prepares to enter Jewish adulthood by becoming a bat mitzvah as a part of this warm and wonderful spiritual community.

We invite you to join us via livestream to share in our happiness as Avi is called to the Torah as a bat mitzvah. Although the current restrictions on in-person gatherings mean that we will be unable to celebrate together in person, knowing that all of us will be connected as a community of prayer and love will make the day feel even more meaningful as Avi takes her own place among the Jewish people.

Knowing that you will be with us virtually for this celebration is the only gift we require. Thank you for helping us share this great joy in our family's life.

– Rabbi Oren & Julie Hayon

Emanu El Online Trivia Night

Sunday, August 16, 7:00 p.m.

Join Congregation Emanu El for another fun Trivia Night, hosted by Game Time Adventures! Play for FREE against your fellow congregants online for bragging rights – play as a household or as an individual.

The custom-built game nights are a fun and challenging experiences where players muse a variety of different skill sets and ways of thinking to win. It's an experience beyond your average game night.

Register online by 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 16 at gametimeadventures.com/emanu-el-houston, to receive information on how to connect on the night of the event.

The information on how to connect will be sent out roughly 60-90 minutes before the game. Individuals and teams are encouraged to join the trivia room at 6:30 p.m. for a pre-game schmooze or stay after.

"The Silk Road" captained by Jeff Silk won the July trivia championship after five competitive rounds.

For more information, contact Jason Plotkin at jasonp@emanuelhouston.org or 713.535.6414.

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Exploring Elul: Preparation and Reflection for the High Holy Days

Thursdays, 12:30 – 1:15 p.m.

Prepare for the High Holy Days with the clergy and Director of Congregational Learning Stefani Carlson. Join us for a class on the themes of the season every Thursday in the Hebrew month of Elul, starting on **Thursday, August 20** and continuing weekly through **Thursday, September 17**.

This offering will be held via Zoom. Specific themes for the classes will be shared in the coming weeks in synagogue communications.

Kid Food: The Challenge of Feeding Children in a Highly Processed World

Thursday, September 3, 7:30 p.m.



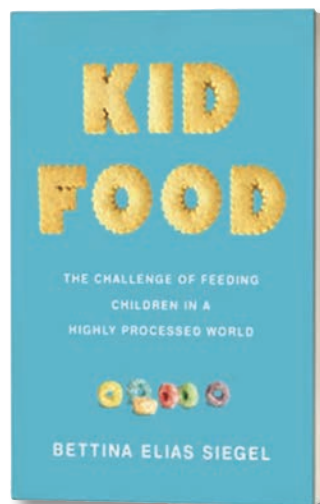
Bettina Elias Siegel

Originally scheduled this past spring, the Evelyn Rubenstein Jewish Community Center of Houston (ERJCC) and Congregation Emanu El are proud to host former Becker parent Bettina Elias Siegel, author of *Kid Food: The Challenge of Feeding Children in a Highly Processed World* via Zoom. She will be in conversation with Zibby Owens, host of the acclaimed podcast *Mom's Don't Have Time to Read Books*.

This program will be available for everyone to enjoy in the safety and comfort of their home, and registration information will be shared closer to the event through the ERJCC website.

As Siegel shares in her book, most parents start out wanting to raise healthy eaters then the world intervenes. In *Kid Food*, the author explores one of the fundamental challenges of modern parenting: trying to raise healthy eaters in a society intent on pushing children in the opposite direction.

Siegel will delve into the many influences that make feeding children healthfully today so difficult – from the prevailing belief that kids will only eat highly processed “kid food” to the near-constant barrage of “special treats.”



With expert advice, time-tested advocacy tips, and a trove of useful resources, *Kid Food* offers parents both

the knowledge and the tools to navigate their children's unhealthy food landscape – and change it for the better.

For Siegel, this interest started in 2020 as she sought to improve the food in her children's school district, Houston ISD, and soon after launched *The Lunch Tray*, a blog about all things related to “kids and food, in school and out.” In 2015, *Family Circle* named Siegel one of the country's “20 Most Influential Moms,” and in 2020, she was named one of “20 Heroines Revolutionizing Food Activism to Improve the Planet” by *Food Tank*.

Zibby Owens, the interviewer for the evening, is the host of the acclaimed podcast *Mom's Don't Have Time to Read Books*. Zibby's articles on books and parenting have been published in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Parents*, *Real Simple*, *SELF* and many other outlets, and she frequently appears on television shows like *Good Morning America* and *Good Day LA*.

For more information, contact Jason Plotkin at jasonp@emanuelhouston.org or 713.535.6414.

Men of Reform Judaism: Akiva Tor of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Sunday, September 13, 12:00 p.m.



Join the Men of Reform Judaism (MRJ) – a national organization representing men's groups and clubs from across the Reform Movement – as it hosts Akiva Tor, the head of the Bureau for World Jewish Affairs and World Religions at the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This event is open to everyone!

Tor previously served as Consul General of Israel for the Pacific Northwest, Director of the Israel Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei and Deputy Director for Palestinian Affairs in the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Additionally, Tor served as World Jewish Affairs Adviser to the President of Israel in which capacity he began the organization of the World Jewish Forum, an initiative for creating a pan-Jewish strategy for stemming assimilation and decline in Jewish life.

There is no cost for the event though registration is required by visiting https://uso2web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Dqm3SoSGTN2hxigt0hSvJA. An ‘easy to click’ link can be found on our emanuelhouston.org website or future synagogue communications.

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UPCOMING PROGRAMMING *continued from page 1*

Conversations

Wednesdays, 12:00 p.m.

Join us for “*Conversations*” as Program Director Jason Plotkin sits down with a member of the congregation, community or from the sports world to discuss the current state of affairs while we are separated due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Previous guests have included: First Christian Church pastor Michael Dunn, Jackie Fisherman and Taryn Baranowski from the Jewish Federation of Greater

Houston, Houston Independent School District (HISD) school board member Elizabeth Santos, Jewish Family Services Chief Operating Officer Carl Josehart, Shariq Ghandi of the Minaret Foundation, Fox 8 New Orleans Sports Director Juan Kincaid, Martin Cominsky of Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston, Corpus Christi Hooks play-by-play voice Michael Coffin and more!

“*Conversations*” is available on the Emanu El Facebook page and our streaming video page (select Proler Chapel). Archived editions are available on the Emanu El YouTube Channel.

Emanu El Memorial Park Cemetery Protocols



Photo by Buz Marvins

We share in your grief and understand how difficult things are at this time. When planning funerals at the EEMP cemetery, please refer to the funeral guidelines posted on the Emanu El website under “Emanu El Memorial Park” (emanuelhouston.org/eemp). These guidelines have been put into place to keep everyone as safe as possible during the pandemic, while trying to keep the families’ feelings and wishes in mind. These guidelines are reviewed on a continuing basis by the Cemetery Committee and Clergy with guidance from the Office of the Governor and local leaders.

If you would like a PDF copy of these guidelines, please contact Alisha Klapholz at 713.529.5771, ext. 213 or alishak@emanuelhouston.org.

Emanu El Memorial Park, 8341 Bissonnet, is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Burials, ceremonies and approved activities shall only be made during the cemetery’s open hours and not on Saturdays or other holy days as designated by the rabbis of the congregation.

Cemetery Plot Increase Goes Into Effect This September

The Cemetery Committee recently made the decision to postpone the planned cemetery plot increase until **September** due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Below is the plot pricing to be in effect on **September 1**:

MEMBER

Pre-need: \$3,900.00 **At need:** \$4,300.00

NON-MEMBER

Pre-need: \$6,200.00 **At need:** \$6,700.00

For questions or plot purchases, please contact Alisha Klapholz at 713-529-5771 or at alishak@emanuelhouston.org.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT *continued from page 1*

by offering new ways to engage remotely with our congregational community beyond our worship services. I hope you've had a chance to catch Jason Plotkin's Conversations program on Wednesdays at noon. Or maybe you cheered on Team Hayon during Jewish Geography Zoom Racing. On August 19, the Sisterhood's reimagined donor lunch – rescheduled from March – takes an exciting turn with its digital program and catered lunch delivered to guests' doors. Sisterhood's July book review also successfully shifted online.

The Board of Trustees has also moved to a digital platform for our meetings, as well as some lunchtime learning. In the wake of national calls to address racism in our country, Rabbi Silk, Fredi Franks and I led the Board in a group book discussion of the memoir *The Color of Love: The Story of a Mixed-Race Jewish Girl by Marra Gad*. This powerful story of what it's like to be a person of color in a Jewish Community provided an opportunity for the Board to learn and reflect together. Following the positive feedback of the discussion, we are already planning more meaningful ways for our board to continue this important conversation.

July's slow pace often provides the Board a break in our monthly meeting schedule, but navigating the challenges of COVID-19 has kept the Executive Committee and the Board very busy this summer. In June, the Board adopted the recommendation of the Ritual & Music Committee to hold our High Holiday Services remotely to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our congregants, staff and clergy. Earlier this summer, we convened a task force to develop a plan for reopening our facilities to the congregation. The Phased Reopening task force, chaired by Philip Tenenbaum, includes experts in the medical, administrative and human resource fields. The Phased Reopening plan will be available on the temple website and will be updated as necessary to reflect any change in the science or regulatory guidelines.

The Board is also overseeing the temple budget to ensure our congregation remains financially sound and fiscally responsible. Emanu El is not immune to the economic impact of the coronavirus and our

annual budget looks quite different today than in early 2020. Fortunately, we have a talented group of staff and congregants advising us, led by our Executive Director David Lamden and Treasurer Fredi Franks, with support from the Finance and Budget Committee, Executive Committee and Board of Trustees. Meeting almost daily, our staff and lay leadership are diligently reviewing every line in our budget in order to maintain a well-managed budget. Through their hard work, Emanu El was fortunate to receive a significant federal Payroll Protection Program loan in May, which softened – but did not eliminate – the substantial impact of decreasing revenue from The Becker School and annual commitments. On the cost side, reduced operations in the building have trimmed some expenses, but those savings are partially reduced by the cost of preparing the facilities for a safe reopening.

Our largest expense is staff compensation. In late April, with the pandemic in full swing, previously budgeted salary increases were frozen. Faced with a shifting landscape and uncertain operating revenues, fiscal prudence demanded that we make more cuts. At the July 14 meeting, the Board heard the Finance Committee's recommendation. Guided by a desire to avoid layoffs and to have the least impact on the lowest paid employees, the Board approved salary reductions for our clergy, senior staff and administrative staff. No salary reductions were made to hourly employees, which includes teachers and maintenance staff.

Our lay leadership made this difficult decision only after careful, thoughtful discussion, with an eye on the current fiscal year as well as next year and beyond. To further bolster our financial stability, a revenue task force is already underway and will be looking at all resources and opportunities. The economic impact of the pandemic is undeniable, and the lay leadership is committed to keeping our congregation financially sound and preserving our sacred community and traditions. We will continue to update you throughout the year as we partner together to keep Emanu El a healthy, vibrant community.

– Jeri Amundsen, President

Our clergy want to know . . .

If you or a loved one is sick or hospitalized please let us know.

Contact the synagogue at 713.529.5771, so that our rabbis can reach out and visit and be a source of strength and support.

Visiting the sick and praying for those who are ill are important and meaningful mitzvot.



Becker School

An Update on our Becker School

As we continue to navigate the challenges of COVID-19, I want to update our congregation on our progress in working to prepare for the start of the 2020-21 school year.

We are continually evaluating and refining our protocols, and creating new guidelines as needed in order to be ready when school reopens. Our goal is to start the school year with all children and teachers in classes on campus while carefully adhering to health and safety protocols.

At the same time, we recognize the fluid nature of COVID-19, and our plans must be flexible and adhere to established public health guidelines. We want to provide you with continued confidence that the health and safety of our children and teachers is our highest priority.

A Becker COVID-19 Task Force was formed to help develop a plan for our reopening, and the members of the Task Force have met several times to examine and discuss related issues. In order to safely reopen Becker School, we constantly are assessing information, acting decisively, and developing guidelines and procedures in service of our community.

The following principles guide our plan for reopening campus:

- Protect the health and safety of students and staff.

- Be compliant with government orders and guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- Establish effective use of spaces to support physical distancing.
- Provide a school day experience with a variety of familiar routines.

Our plans for reopening Becker involve preparation of the physical facility for proper social distancing; necessary health guidelines and protocols; and enhanced technology to support instructional programming.

For a more complete description of the Becker health and safety guidelines, please refer to the Becker COVID-19 Handbook at emanuelhouston.org/becker.

We look forward to welcoming families and children back to Becker. It is our goal to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which your child can grow emotionally, socially, intellectually, physically, and spiritually. Our program may look slightly different as a result of COVID-19, but we are very much committed to providing a creative learning space that will stimulate and challenge your child's natural curiosity and inquiring mind.

– Barbara Loeser, Becker School interim director

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Welcome Our Newest Members

We are pleased to welcome the newest members to our congregational family. Please be sure to introduce yourself to our newcomers as they become a part of our community.

Courtini & Justin Asher, son Steven
Rebecca Ginsburg & Scott Pepin, son Jacob
Eliza & David Rappaport, sons Edward & Nathaniel
Ashton Smith
Casey & Adam Weaver, daughter Arden

New members will be shared in the *Bulletin* regularly. Know someone interested in becoming a part of our community? New to town or looking to find a way to connect with Emanu El? Contact Jason Plotkin at jasonp@emanuelhouston.org or 713.535.6414.

Under 25-Year-Old Membership: FREE!

Have a recent college graduate moving back to Houston this summer? Know a young professional that is new to town or just venturing out on their own? Congregation Emanu El gifts free memberships to all those members of our Jewish community under the age of 25. For more information, connect with Jason Plotkin at jasonp@emanuelhouston.org or 713.535.6414.



Helfman Religious School

Dear Emanu El Community,

Despite all the uncertainty in our world these days, we are delighted to present the plan for Helfman Religious School for the 2020-21/5771 school year. This plan, which was approved by the Congregation Emanu El Board of Directors last month, represents months of work on the part of the Helfman staff team, the Helfman Religious School Committee, and several of our curriculum partners, with guidance from state and local health authorities and the Congregation Emanu El Phased Reopening Task Force.

When the Helfman staff team and I began the process of planning for this year, we chose to focus on the affordances of the current health situation, not the limitations. We took advantage of the knowledge that no matter what we did it would be a change from the past to undergo a full strategic visioning process. We had a number of high-level conversations about our goals and vision for our program, our core values, and how we might free ourselves to think about the best ways to meet the needs of our learners and their families, not just for this year but looking into the future. We are very excited about the impact those conversations have had on our planning, especially for our 4-6 grade Hebrew program.

We will be beginning our school year on Sunday, August 30 with a hybrid model of home-based learning, utilizing "*La'bri-ut: To Our Health and Wellness*," a new curriculum developed by the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC, one of our regular curriculum partners), in partnership with the Covenant Foundation and guided by a group of educators from across the country, including myself. The program, which combines synchronous learning on Sunday mornings with asynchronous project-based learning, will be led by our own clergy, teachers, staff and teen TAs.

In addition to the new Judaics program, each student in grades 4-6 will be assigned to two Hebrew classes: a Full-Group class of 10-12 students, which will meet on Sundays, and a Small-Group class of 4-5 students, which will meet once a week. Families will have the option of choosing an online-only class or a hybrid class.

After the High Holy Days, in mid-October, we hope to begin to return to campus-based learning according to the guidelines laid out in the Emanu El Phased Reopening Plan. Our Upper School program will begin in October, to maximize flexibility. We have also tentatively scheduled five opportunities for school-wide on-campus events, the details of which will be shared as each approaches. T'fillah will continue to be live-streamed on Sundays and Wednesdays throughout the school year and any student who desires to continue with home-based learning once we have resumed on-campus instruction will have the opportunity to do so. Our full calendar is available at emanuelhouston.org.

If you have not already done so, please enroll your children at emanuelhouston.org. Many of our teachers rely on their Helfman Religious School teaching salaries for a significant portion of their incomes. Your tuition payment helps us to keep them employed and contributes to the well-being of their families, especially during this difficult time.

We are optimistic about this year, excited about the possibilities, and looking forward to seeing you all, whether online or on campus. Until then, we are "hoping to be together, planning to be apart."

Wishing you a happy, healthy rest of the summer. *La'Bri-ut!*

– Stefani Carlson, Director of Congregational Learning



We appreciate the thoughtfulness of those who remember and honor their friends and loved ones through their generous contributions through July 15, 2020.

ABLON FUND FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS

To provide creative arts programs
In Memory of
Rose Ann Martin Finkel
Dayle & Mark Krinsky

ACCESS FOR ALL FUND

To ensure Emanu El is a welcoming, accessible and inclusive community
In Appreciation of
Our Clergy
Saranne & Livingston
Kosberg

In Honor of
Carol & Michael Wilk's Anniversary
Pat & Aaron Fradkin

In Memory of
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Rozanne & Howard
Rubin
Melvyn Fradkin
Pat & Aaron Fradkin
Rozanne and Howard
Rubin
Naman Lipinsky
fredi & Paul Franks

ALAN GAYLOR TEACHER ASSISTANT FUND

To support Helfman Religious School teacher assistants
In Memory of
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Joni & Gary Lewis &
Lillian Gaylor

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To support small and emerging organizations that improve life for undeserved Houstonians
In Memory of
Bradley Keith Cyprus
Rochelle Cyprus
Rose Ann Martin Finkel
Shelley & Vic Wisner
Naman Lipinsky
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Morris "Ike" Rosenthal

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Marilynne & Alford
Bleeker

BECKER EARLY CHILDHOOD FUND

To provide for and enhance Becker School programs
In Honor of
The Birth of Dani & Fredi Fixler
Barbara Loeser

In Memory of
Bernard "Bernie" Berman
Becky & Cliff Chatham
James Friedman
Cheryl & Haran Levy

BECKER EARLY CHILDHOOD SCHOLARSHIP FUND

To provide Becker Early Childhood Center scholarships
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Barbara Loeser
Jeri Amundsen

In Memory of
James Friedman
Sara Astrich
Fonda Glazer

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To provide a scholarship to an outstanding Confirmation student to a NFTY event
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& Allison & Tem Nieto

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Sharon & Herb Cohn

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Roni Light
Robert Light

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A Donation
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In Honor of
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Bernard Silverman
The B'nei Mitzvah of Hannah & Benjamin Turner
Gloria & Ben Tobor

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Carol & Barry Goodfriend
Rona and L.A. Train

Melvyn Fradkin
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Nancy & Mark Reichek
Stanford Rosen
Carol & Mark Entman
Dorothy "Dotty" Shelby
Nancy & Alan Shelby

CONGREGATION EMANU EL BROTHERHOOD

To enhance and sustain the Brotherhood
In Memory of
David Silverman
A.J. Saper

EDWARD WAYNE HUNGER FUND

To feed the hungry of Houston
In Honor of
Aliza Plotkin - Young Leadership Award
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In Memory of
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Sarah Astrich & Lorraine
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Keith Solomon
Linda Cohn Walter
Beadie Lewis and Family

FLORENCE & BEN BLUM LEADERSHIP FUND

To send Emanu El leadership to URJ Biennials and underwrite leadership programs and speakers
In Memory of
Bernard "Bernie" Berman
Diane Brezner
J. Victor Samuels
Myra Lipper

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To enhance musical programming
In Memory of
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Donna & William
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To provide for the general needs of Emanu El and its facilities
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Rose Sandler
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Franklin Roth
Morris Zucker
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**The Bar Mitzvah of
Ethan Walter**

Ruby Sondock

In Memory of

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Melvyn Fradkin**

James Friedman

Arnold Nitishin
Sondra Ross

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religions and cultures*

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Stephen Paine

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WALTER ENRICHMENT
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Rose Sandler

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Anniversary in
Rabbinat & Emanu El**

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Elsa Laufman
Barbara Loeser
Steve Whitfield
Lorraine Wulfe

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Birthday**

Elsa Laufman

**The Bar Mitzvah of Ethan
Walter**

Sara Astrich

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Sherry Stoger

Melvyn Fradkin

Helen Brounes

Tootie & Steve Fradkin

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Jonathan Stoger

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*To provide scholarships for
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*To support programs
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In Memory of

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*To send congregants
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In Memory of

Bernard "Bernie" Berman

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Linda Cohn Walter

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*To enhance preschool
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*To help send Confirmation
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In Memory of

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Carol & Barry Goodfriend

**SHIRLEY BARISH
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*To send Helfman Religious
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In Memory of
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Gloria Pepper &
Dr. Bernard Katz
Franklin Roth
J. Victor Samuels
Marvin Barish

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To provide flowers at
Congregation Emanu El
In Memory of
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Sylvia & Steven Brody

SISTERHOOD FUND

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Dolores Wilkenfeld

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David Askanase
Lila Rauch

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To support the needs of the
Temple and to fulfill the
mission of Congregation
Emanu El

A Donation

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We’re a Multiracial Jewish Family; We Don’t Have the Answers, but Here’s a Place to Start

By Aliza & Jason Plotkin

Article was originally published in late June by the Union for Reform Judaism. A copy complete with links to the resources referenced can be found on the URJ.org website.

This September, our son Isaac Ray will turn 5 years old. While we have similar hopes and aspirations for Isaac that our friends do for their children, we know that as a Black child, he will face challenges in reaching those goals that his white peers will not face.

Yes, this child of ours happily visits with staff members at his dad’s synagogue before going to school.

Yes, when he visits a new synagogue, he will politely demand to see its Torah scrolls.

Yes, a lay leader dubbed him a member of the congregation’s building and grounds committee because of his knack for spotting something out of sorts, even from a mile away in the sanctuary.

Yes, he enjoys donning a PJ Library apron to bake classic Jewish and Israeli recipes alongside his mother. All of this sounds good – except when it’s not.

At an event in our Jewish community, what happens when an older individual mistakes Isaac for the son of a maintenance member?

What happens when we are at the JCC pool with Isaac and a woman picks him up thinking he has been separated from his family (even when he’s playing right in front of us)?

What happens when folks in our communities approach us about racist experiences they witnessed, or their own racist experiences as Jews of Color? What happens when they seek someone to listen to them or guide them, due to our visibility in the Houston community as a multiracial family?

When we committed to adopting Isaac, we felt we could shoulder both the responsibility of being parents and raising a child of a different race.

Simply put, we knew the work would be hard, and hard it has been.

As we have walked the path of antiracism, we’ve made mistakes. We’ve had to learn to be vulnerable and turn to experts, the Jews of Color who have lived these experiences. It hasn’t always been easy, but it’s always been worth it, especially since our son’s life, in many ways, depends on this learning. It has opened our eyes in so many ways, and we are forever grateful.

Due to our personal experiences and our roles as Jewish leaders, we’ve always wanted to be stewards of information, to educate other white people, and provide whatever resources and knowledge we can to combat systemic racism and help create a society accepting of all races, religions, sexual orientation, ability statuses, etc.

The murder of George Floyd in Minnesota was a harrowing reminder to bring light to these issues – not just for

continued next page



Jason, Isaac and Aliza Plotkin.

Isaac, but for all who have hurdles in front of them that should not exist.

How can other white people play a role? We are certainly no experts, and our mission will always be to elevate the voices of those who have given us their time and energy, but here's where we suggest white people can begin:

1. Learn from Jews of Color who have stories to share.

An excellent starting point can be found in Kveller's "13 Jews of Color to Follow on Social Media Right Now." As the article suggests, "listen to Black Jews, learn from Black Jews, but don't ask them for help – they're asking for ours."

We should not expect People of Color to do the heavy lifting on your personal journey to make a change, but instead turn to these Jews' existing resources and insights to reach what you aspire to accomplish.

2. Make your organization or synagogue talk about racism.

Perhaps your synagogue is struggling to start the conversation. Ask yourself: Did you see a program of interest at another synagogue or organization that will be streamed online? You can expand the reach and bring those resources home to your community.

Recently, our congregation in Houston found out about a "Timely Discussion About Racism" program created by Temple Sinai in Atlanta, GA. A few phone calls and emails later, this program – which featured a community activist, a pastor at the heart of the civil rights effort, and a rabbi – was not only broadcast in Atlanta but found its way into the homes of Houstonians.

3. Include – but do not tokenize – multiracial families in your communities.

Including Jews of Color or multiracial families for the point of "checking it off the list" needs to "bite the dust." Multiracial families do not want to be ignored, but nei-

ther do they want to be seen as a way to achieve some sort of board directive.

Yes, we are a multiracial family, but the goal of congregations should be to form relationships, regardless of who people are. Further, white parents of children of Color should not replace adults of Color when it comes to honoring inclusion.

As Amy Asin, the URJ's Vice President of Strengthening Congregation said at the 2019 URJ Biennial, "Many of our congregations do not reflect this diversity because we haven't yet been open to the change we need to make in order for people who do not look or act like us to feel at home."

If these families are included, there will be a more natural progression to leadership and involvement within your communities. In turn, the congregation's leadership will reflect the diversity that is becoming of the Jewish community.

4. Learn about resources available to Jews of Color and multiracial families.

When we welcomed Isaac into our lives, many in our own community knew little to nothing about the resources available to Jews of Color or multiracial families. Jewish synagogues and organizational professionals are still learning what resources are out there.

According to the Jews of Color Field Building Initiative, Jews of Color represent 12-15 percent of the Jewish population. In areas like San Francisco, those numbers jump to 25 percent of households in which a member considers themselves a Jew of Color.

If we are truly striving to be inclusive, it's important to look internally within the URJ at the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit, the Community Assessment, and to also learn about other organizations.

As a young family, the two organizations that have provided us the most guidance are Be'chol LaShon, which provides useful book lists, camp offerings, and speakers, and the Jewish Multiracial Network, which provides book lists, trainings, and workshops.

These are just initial steps to "on-ramp" yourself to the conversation with a very low barrier. The key is to keep the conversation going and not just create a vicious cycle where we need another incident like George Floyd's murder to start the conversation all over again.

Jason Plotkin is the program director at Congregation Emanu El in Houston, Texas. Jason is the membership board member of the Program and Engagement Professionals of Reform Judaism (PEP-RJ) and also is a member of the National Association of Temple Administration (NATA). Aliza Plotkin is a national board member of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and is completing her term as president of NCJW's Greater Houston Section. Recently, Aliza was named the Barbara & Harold Falik Young Leadership Award recipient by the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston.



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grat·i·tude

/gradə,t(y)ōd/ noun

Definition: the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

I want to thank everyone for the honor and privilege of serving families within the community. It is most humbling to be given your trust and the great responsibility of taking care of your loved ones.

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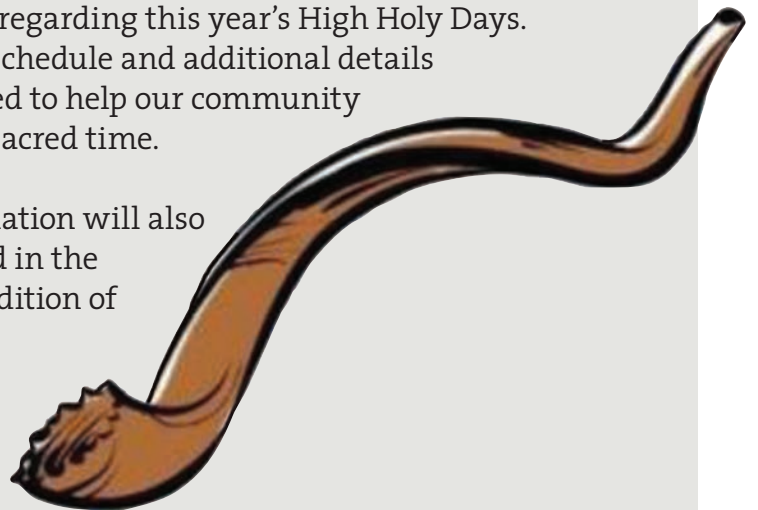
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High Holy Day Brochure Coming To A Mailbox Near You In August

Congregants are advised to watch for communications mid-August regarding this year's High Holy Days. The service schedule and additional details will be shared to help our community during this sacred time.

More information will also be publicized in the September edition of the *Bulletin*.



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