

beth shalom
auckland new zealand
בית שלום



October 2020

Tishrei~Cheshvan 5781

Teruah



*A strong, vibrant community with a spiritual heart
embracing Jewish life and its diversity.*

(ISSN 1177-2352)

Our Board members

Affiliated with the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ)

Charities Commission Registration Number CC29542

PO Box 26 052, Epsom, Auckland 1344, New Zealand

Tel: 09 524 4139 Fax: 0282 552 3027

Office: Christine O'Brien office@bethshalom.org.nz

Website: www.bethshalom.org.nz

Executive

- President, Olga Bernstein, president@bethshalom.org.nz
- Immediate Past President, Debbie Swiatek, debswiatek@gmail.com
- Acting Vice President, Alistair Kirk, vice_president@bethshalom.org.nz
- Secretary, Carol McCracken, secretary@bethshalom.org.nz (Hebrew School and Adult Education)
- Treasurer, Shane Sampson treasurer@bethshalom.org.nz

Board members and portfolios

- Jude Berman, judemberman@gmail.com
- Julie Dick, primroseji@gmail.com, Burial & Benevolent Society
- Terry Haffern, haffernt@outlook.com, Ritual, Garden
- Alistair Kirk, alikir09@gmail.com, Vision Project
- Ted Ries, tedbries@gmail.com, Security, JCC
- Sandra van Eden, waiatamanu1@gmail.com, Membership
- Michelle Wise, wisemichelle@gmail.com

Educator, Debbie Miller educator@bethshalom.org.nz

Auckland Jewish Burial & Benevolent Society, Sue Berman 022 051 3589

Email: ajbbs@bethshalom.org.nz

Service times are Fridays at 6:30pm and Saturdays at 10am.

During COVID-19 Level 2, some Friday services will continue via Zoom.

Saturday services will be in the Sanctuary and livestreamed on OneRoom.

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Opinions expressed in Teruah do not necessarily represent the views of Beth Shalom Board of Management.

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Coming up in October

- Sukkot morning service Saturday 3rd at 10am. While the online option is available, we do hope a number of you will attend the service in person. We are honoured that Rabbi Sergio Bergman, President of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, is giving us the drash long distance. We thank David Robinson for having coordinated this for us.
- Friday 9 October at 6.30pm - please join our **Erev Simchat Torah service**. We hope that we will be on Alert Level One by then in which case we will celebrate as we usually do with a pot luck dessert and also Israeli dancing. We will confirm the arrangements next week.
- Saturday 10 October at 10am - **Yizkor Shemini Atzeret Simchat Torah service**.
- Beth Shalom Sunday School commences Term 4 on Sunday October 18th at 9.30am.
- Please diary our Special General Meeting scheduled for Sunday 18 October 2020.
- Let's continue the tradition of **tzedakah** in the spirit of the High Holy Days, by donating to a foodbank or supermarket collection box
- A reminder about our prayers for healing; if you would like our home prayer group to pray for healing for you or for someone close to you please advise the office



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John Barnfield
Commercial Broker
P +64 9 942 4936
M +64 21 449 096
john.barnfield@rothbury.co.nz



Peter Palmer
Senior Commercial Broker
P +64 9 914 3471
M +64 21 445 608
peter.palmer@rothbury.co.nz

President, Olga Bernstein's Rosh Hashanah speech, 5781

Shana tova

I've been looking at the BS tag line - 'A strong, vibrant community with a spiritual heart, embracing Jewish life and its diversity'

And it's made me think:

- What does it mean to be a strong community?
- Indeed, in these times, what does it mean to be a community?
- And what is the diversity in our community?
- Are we embracing it? And how do we embrace it?

So are we a strong community? Yes and no. Do we have challenges? Most definitely! Do we have opportunities? Yes, we most certainly do.

As I look back on the year just passed, it is fair to say that it's been unusual and a challenge.

For all of us, Covid has presented challenges which we've never faced before. As a community, we've had to think about how to stay connected, how to pray together using remote technology, how to learn, celebrate and grieve together but remotely.

By definition, 'community' is actually people. I'd like to acknowledge the amazing people who work tirelessly to keep things going:

- Our Ritual Committee, led by Naomi Johnson, who have given countless hours to arranging services and adapting to an on-line environment.
- Debbie Miller, who has had to plan how to continue Hebrew School and adult learning via Zoom, and her dedicated Hebrew School teachers who volunteer their time to prepare lessons and teach.
- Sue Berman and her wonderful B&B committee, who have adapted to a really difficult situation and made it possible for people to mourn in ways that are meaningful.
- Our wonderful Community Outreach group, led by Chris Shiller and Lorna Orbell, who have kept in contact and provided care for so many people over this time
- Our Garden committee.
- Our amazing service leaders.
- Our shamashim
- Our HHD singing group
- Chris Shiller and Terry Gelbart, who are our outstanding bnei mitvah teachers

- The Board, and in particular Alistair Kirk who so ably stepped in as acting President and is leading the Vision Project, Shane Sampson, who with Susanne Murek, have been sorting out our financial systems and invoicing, and Ted Ries, who is helping with the discussions about the JCC and is overseeing the installation of the new security system.
- Christine O'Brien, who has worked at all times of the day and night keeping our admin going.
- Paul Wilton, who is leading the group working with the AHC regarding the JCC, and gives so generously of his time in so many capacities.
- Bill Merrill, who does maintenance work for us.
- And so many more unsung heroes and heroines, including my family.

I thank you all and apologise if I've forgotten to name anyone

Besides Covid, we've had other challenges: For me, the ones that stand out are:

- Debbie Swiatek, who was an amazing President, left to follow her family to the USA.
- We still don't have a Rabbi.
- We rely on volunteer workers and, over time, processes that worked well have fallen into misuse or are forgotten.
- We are at a moment in history when we're questioning our purpose and reason for being.

And we also have some exciting opportunities. For me, there are 5 'big ticket items' that are my top priorities.

- The first one is operational: We need to make sure that our systems and processes are fit for purpose, documented and working.

I speak on behalf of the current Board, when I say that we're committed to getting our systems back in order and functioning well.

- Then there are strategic projects, which I'll talk more about later:
 - The Jewish Community Centre (JCC) proposal
 - The need for Rabbinic presence
 - The Vision Project
- And my last priority is about us, as a community
 - I want us to have activities and learning that connects us to our Judaism and one another.

As you probably know, the AHC has purchased the site of St Kentigen school in Remuera and will be moving there in 2023. The possibility of creating a shared Jewish Community Centre on the site is subject to ongoing discussion. This is an opportunity, but also adds to the uncertainty we're facing. We'll keep you informed of these discussions as they happen. I want to stress that Beth Shalom is a democracy and no decision about the JCC or a possible move will or can be made without the support of the community.

I think most of us will agree that we need a rabbinic presence. This year, we'll be looking at financing and procuring a rabbi.

The Covid-19 pandemic has coincided with a project we've started working on with Rabbi George Weilechowski - The Vision Project. Beth Shalom is now 64 years old. It's time we thought carefully and creatively about our future. We're re-looking at our purpose and who and how we're serving. And out of that, we'll have a clear idea of who and what we are, who we serve and want to serve, and the services we want to provide.

Over the next few months, we'll be reaching out to you to hear from you how you envisage the future of the community. I ask you to join us in this exciting project.

And last but not least, this year we are committed to providing more ways for our community to come together: socially, spiritually and joyfully. You have told us how much you value learning opportunities, guest speakers, social events and outdoor hikes. We know also that the Vision Project will uncover a whole range of ideas that we want to be able to deliver on.

But we need your help to do this: We need funds to provide a fuller range of activities, Rabbinic presence and learning opportunities. You'll have received an email about our HHD appeal and I ask you to please give as generously as possible so that we can have the means to fund the activities that we, as a community, want.

We're coming up on times of renewal: Rosh Hashanah, Simchat Torah, and the first days of Spring. Despite the hard months we've had, I feel a sense of optimism and, dare I say it, hope. Between the Vision Project, which will refine our values and priorities for a changing world, and the potential JCC move, which will see our community make some monumental decisions about where we call home, the next couple of years may well prove to be the most consequential since the founding of Beth Shalom.

I wish you and yours shana tova - May this be a good year for us and our families, for Progressive Judaism in Auckland, and for the world.

19 September 2020/1 Tishrei 5781

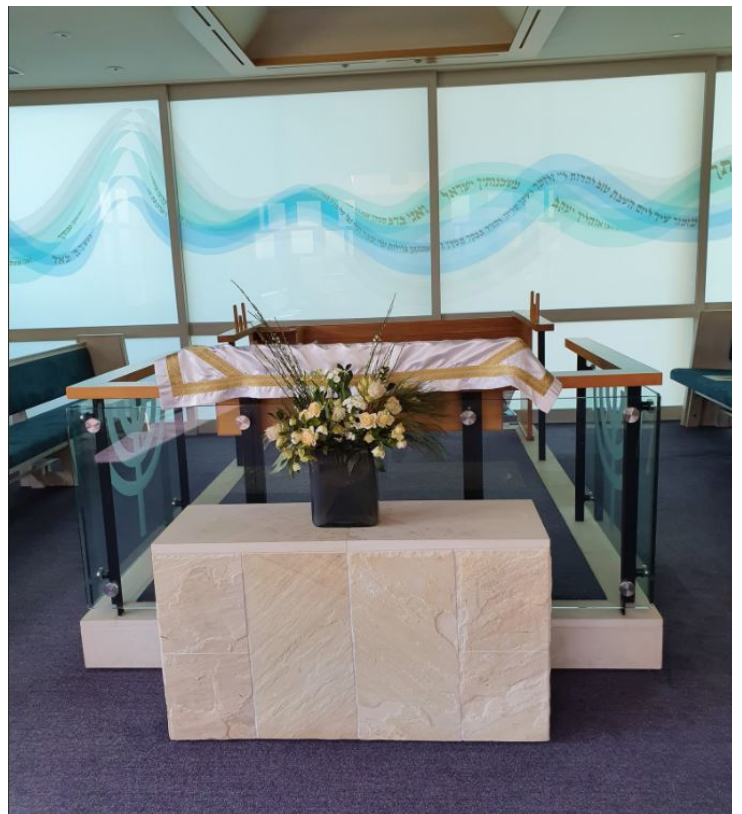
FROM THE BOARD

.....what is happening within our community and what we have been working on recently.

- **The High Holy Days:** What can we say but so many acknowledgements and thanks to so many people, far too many to mention by name here, who have expended so much energy and time to make the Yamim Noraim of 2020 so special. Notwithstanding the Covid 19 level 2.5 restrictions and some glitches in the technology, we have had a lot of positive feedback from the community. There were attendees from 5 countries logging in to the different services through the OneRoom portal.
- **Vision Project:** The second of four strategic planning meetings with Rabbi George took place on September 13th. We will be working on trying to get Rabbi George over here as soon as possible.
- **JCC (Jewish Community Centre):** Communications and discussions are still taking place with regard to this project. The Beth Shalom community meeting will be to discuss the status of the project and solicit feedback. Again, if you have any thoughts at this stage about the project, we do want to hear from you. Remember the date of the meeting is set for **October 18th**. Details of the meeting will be confirmed once we know what level we will be at.
- The Board will be holding a retreat on 11th October.

We would, though, specifically like to acknowledge the Ritual Committee and especially Naomi for driving the whole process. We would also like to acknowledge Community Care. They did such a great job with the Rosh Hashanah goodie bags. There were a lot of appreciative phone calls and emails from recipients. They also supplied the goodie bags to take away for breaking the fast after the YK services.

Flowers for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur kindly donated by Scarecrow (Alison and Paul Dyson)



What Will We Listen for This Year?

Shabbat shalom and Shanah Tovah, friends! I'm honored to be able to wish you all, even if from very far away, a new year filled with joy, health, abundant sustenance and blessings, and the loving presence of family and friends in your lives. Ideally, that presence will increasingly manifest itself in real life this new year unfolds.

To get started, it's probably best if we just acknowledge how different this all is straight away:

- So, I know everyone has a podcast these days but a podcast sermon probably wasn't on your high holy day wish list; it wasn't on mine either. I was hoping to be with you in person during this special season. But like so many things in our lives this year, we've had to adapt and accept a new way to move forward.
- Along those lines, many of us may be experiencing very real feelings of loss around the lack of engaging in a communal opportunity to look within and to seek transformation and renewal together. I think it's worth saying that out loud and acknowledging that loss.
- Most of us will be listening to this Rosh Hashanah message on our computers, tablets, and smartphones at home this year, or if we're lucky, with a group of 10 or less, and many of us will be missing the comforting and familiar feeling of a friend's shoulder near our own in the pews of Beth Shalom's sanctuary, missing the abundance of strong hugs, kissed cheeks, wide smiles and "Good Yontiff"s that usually mark these special days.
- Maybe, then, we should also take time to acknowledge that we will miss hearing and being moved by the comforting tunes and words; that we will deeply miss listening to the collective song and voice that gives these days so much power.

I've been thinking a lot on that last point, lately . . . about what we make time and space to really, truly hear and listen for in life . . . Whether it's listening to the sound of our own spoken words or hearing and taking in the speech of others, listening to melodies interpreted by human voice, or instruments, or both; tuning in to the sound of our earth, the rush of the sea, the rumble of the heavens, the whispers of the breeze. What would life be like if we could develop a practice of really hearing and listening as we journey through it? What meaning and connection could this bring to us along the way?

It's understandably overlooked, what with all the requests for forgiveness in our liturgy this time of year, but every high holy days, from Rosh HaShanah through Yom Kippur, and the ten days in between, (the days we call the Eser Yamei Tshuva or The Ten Days of Repentance and Return), we are repeatedly and urgently asked by the liturgy and rituals of our tradition to Listen.

We all know this request to Listen simply as what we call . . . the Shema.

During this time of year, the recitation of the Shema, the phrase that some call the watchword statement of our faith, is second only to the entreaty for forgiveness in our high holy day prayers. We recite it, quite literally, dozens of times more than usual during this special season:

"Listen, Israel: The Lord is Our God, The Lord is One."

For a watchword statement, defined as a statement that encompasses the meaning and purpose of a religion, group, or culture, the Shema is, surprisingly, a bit of an enigma. It may shock some of you to learn that the Shema actually has nearly a half-a-dozen possible translations from the ancient Hebrew.

So the big questions that have come up for me, especially this year of all years, and that I'd like to share with you, are . . . Why? Why would the tradition put forward the Shema--this commandment to Listen--as one of the central and most important actions of this most sacred of our seasons? And why, multiple times a day on every other ordinary day of our lives, are we also commanded to remind ourselves to hear, to listen?

A literalist reading of the verse "Listen, Israel: The Lord is Our God. The Lord is One" might indicate a simple answer: It's a lead-in statement; what we moderns might call an "intro;" it's a call to attention for what follows, i.e., a pointer that draws your attention to the two statements that follow it about God's nature and God's importance to us as a people.

But literalism is not how Torah study works. Our Torah relies on us to dig into every verse, to push past the simple meaning of the words and find the deeper, hidden meaning within; the meaning that's been waiting there patiently for us to discover it.

Something about this commandment to Listen has finally clicked into place for me over the past year; a truly tragic year for the world when the overwhelming sound to listen to out there may seem to many of us like voices raised in anxiety and fear; in pain and loss of all kinds. I've begun to think that maybe we've missed something fundamental about the Shema and what it's trying to say to us. Maybe the Shema isn't an introductory declaration of what to listen to, as in: "Now, Listen Up, Israel: The Lord is Our God, The Lord is One" but more its own statement, full stop: "Shema, Israel.," Maybe our ancestors and our tradition have been whispering to us all these years: "Hey, Israel, Listen. Make Sure to Listen." Period.

Yes, the Lord is our God, and, Yes, the Lord is one. But first, just Listen as you Live.

Listen for the moments that mark the passage of time, that demark and define your life and relationships. Listen for words of love. Listen for joy. Listen for words of compassion. Listen for words of forgiveness. Listen for words of unity. Listen for the soft words in a hard world. Listen. Listen. Listen.

Listen deeply and to your core when someone tells you they love you. Listen with gratitude when someone authentically tells you, "I'm sorry," knowing that those words mark and acknowledge your pain; and their regret. Listen with joy when your kids' laughter fills a room.

And the great thing about taking on this new Listening practice, is that the sound of your own voice counts! (Which, at least for rabbis, is something we love to hear as much as possible ;) Listening as you Live is a two-way street, a passive and active experience of transformation!

When you listen to your own voice sharing words of love and compassion, of forgiveness and acceptance, of peace and unity and grace . . . You are Listening to one of the most important sounds you'll ever hear . . . the sound of your highest and best self, the sound of your soul lifting other souls higher!

And there's no better time to start lifting others up than now, at the end of such a tough year, when we're presented with the opportunity Rosh HaShanah gives us to reframe and renew and walk forward with hope. A new year doesn't mean that our individual trials or our local struggles or our shared global challenges will disappear, of course. But if we start to Listen for the moments that lift our souls and bring us meaning and connection, and if we start to make sure our own voices gives those Listening moments to others, then we'll have as good a chance as any to have a Shanah Tovah, a year filled with goodness, no matter what lies ahead.

I'd like to leave you today with an opportunity to start off our new Listening as We Live practice together. The following are the lyrics and the musical performance of a choral piece that lifted me up this year when I felt lowest. I hope it will do the same for you. The following piece was performed in a virtual choir online, by over 17,500 voices from 129 countries, many of them COVID survivors. Its lyrics read:

May we sing together, always.

May our voice be soft.

May our singing be music for others

and may it keep others aloft.

Sing gently, always.

Sing gently as one.

May we stand together, always.

May our voice be strong.

May we hear the singing and

May we always sing along.

Sing gently, always.

Sing gently as one.

- Eric Whitacre

Rabbi George Wielechowski

[Listen here](#) for Kol Nidre Drash.

[Listen here](#) for those who appreciate a longer background music track and a meditative/visualization quality to the piece.

Guest speaker on 3 October

Sukkot Services

at Beth Shalom

Sukkah Decoration
1st October, 11 am - 12 noon
Thurs

Sukkot Evening
2nd October, 6:30 pm
Friday

Sukkot Morning
3rd October, 10 am
Saturday

*With a drash from Rabbi Sergio Bergman,
President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism*

High Holy Days Appeal

Shanah tova friends

At this most spiritual and reflective of times, we ask you, if you are able, to consider supporting the [Beth Shalom High Holy Days appeal](#).

This year, we are committing to a programme of social, spiritual and joyful activities to enhance and strengthen the social bonds of our community. In addition we know that the upcoming Vision Project will result in us being clearer about things our community wants - this may include more activities, Rabbinic presence and retreats.

We are committed to offering a greater range of ways for all of our community to engage with Beth Shalom if they choose to; irrespective of age, means or location. Delivering on this will require funds over and above regular levies and we would dearly love your support.

If you are able to, please donate at <https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/high-holy-days-appeal>



[CLICK HERE FOR THE OCTOBER SERVICE ROSTER](#)



Prayers for Healing Group

A group of Beth Shalom members has commenced, to think of and pray for individuals in our community, who are in need of healing.

The idea is that this group is not an organised group or minyan. Simply, caring people who, when made aware of the need, help healing with the power of prayer.

And that families in distress might receive comfort from the knowledge that this is taking place.

Caring for the unwell is part of being a community.

For those interested, I can supply articles: "The Jewish Way in Healing", and some scientific research on the positive power of prayer in healing.

If you wish to be part of this group

Or, if you know of someone who is unwell that would appreciate our prayer

Please contact Leon Goldwater or Christine O'Brien at shul office

Leon: ldgoldwater@gmail.com 020 403 88054

Christine: office@bethshalom.org.nz 524 4139

Week of Prayer for World Peace 11-18 October 2020

Week of Prayer for World Peace

11-18 OCTOBER 2020

A collection of prayers & quotes brought to you by the Auckland Inter-faith Council to build bridges of peace & celebrate Auckland's diversity.

The Eternal truth is that You alone are God & there is none else. May the righteous of all nations rejoice in Your Love & exult in Your justice.

Let them beat their swords into ploughshares & their spears into pruning hooks.
Let nation not lift up sword against nation nor learn war any more. You shall not hate your brother or your sister in your heart. The stranger that sojourns with you shall be accepted as your equal, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

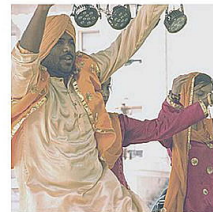
"Why do you crush My people and oppress the poor?" asks God. We know that the Eternal One defends the poor & upholds the rights of the needy.

Praise to God Most High; Blessed is God and deserving of blessing!

A Jewish Prayer for Peace

"Let us be at peace, perfect peace, with ourselves, and give up our whole body and mind and everything as an eternal sacrifice unto the Lord. Lovers see this world as full of love, and haters as full of hatred; fighters see nothing but strife, and the peaceful nothing but peace."

Swami Vivekananda (Hindu)



"Instead of hating the people you think are war-makers, hate the appetites and disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed - but hate these things in yourself, not in another."

**Thomas Merton
(Catholic)**



"As was the will of God, so I ought to have thought; As was the will of God, so I ought to have spoken; As was the will of God, so I ought to have acted. If I have not so thought, so spoken, so acted, Then do I repent for the sin, Do I repent by my thought, word and deed. Do I repent with all my heart and conscience."

Jainism



**Auckland
Inter-Faith Council**



"The Simple Path
Silence is Prayer
Prayer is Faith
Faith is Love
Love is Service
The Fruit of Service is Peace"

Mother Teresa

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O' divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Christian Prayer of St. Francis

Kia hora te marino. Kia whakapapa pounamu te moana. Hei huarahi mā tātou i te rangi nei. Aroha atu, aroha mai. Tātou i a tātou katoa. Hui e! Tāiki e!

May peace be widespread. May the sea be like greenstone, a pathway for us all this day. Let us show respect for each other; for one another! Bind us all together!"

Māori Whakatauki
(Proverb)



"That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

Bahá'u'lláh- Baha'i Faith



O God, give me light in my heart & light in my tongue; & light in my hearing; & light in my sight; & light in my feeling; & light in all body; & light before me; & light behind me. Give me, I pray Thee, light on my right hand & light on my left hand; & light above me; & light beneath me. O Lord, increase light within me; & give me light; & illuminate me. Get rid of the hardship & heal. O Lord of the People, you are the Healer, & there is no healing of disease like Yours. Let it be healing that is not betrayed by sickness.

Prophet Muhammad (Islam)

"The inner power of religion touches our hearts and can recreate us as people of peace. It can cultivate our ability to practice self-control from within. It can overcome historical hatreds and resentments among us. This is the root from which arises true peace and stability. If religions demonstrate love for each other, cooperate with each other, and serve each other, putting the higher ideal of peace ahead of particular doctrines, rituals and cultural backgrounds, the world will change dramatically."

Rev. Sun Myung Moon, 2001

Auckland, with over 220 recorded ethnic groups, is one of the world's most culturally diverse cities. Every neighbourhood has people of many faiths living side by side. To enhance social cohesion and help prevent misunderstandings or prejudice, it is important for people to be able to learn about religious beliefs and practices, and dialogue with those from other faiths. Auckland Inter-Faith Council (AIFC) was formed to provide a platform for inter-religious dialogue and networking, and to create a model showing cooperation among religions.

www.aucklandinterfaithcouncil.org.nz

Ritcom Reports ...

This year was quite exceptional in terms of organising and running the High Holy Days. We still have Sukkot and Simchat Torah to go but with the Teruah deadline looming for October I do want to thank everyone who was involved as it was a great team effort in what was uncharted territory.

- The Ritual Committee – Naomi Johnson, Chris Milton, Pam Miller Terry Gelbart, Eddie Gelbart, Trudi Sawyer, Bill Merrill and Carol McCracken who worked through their action points and delivered so well. We also acknowledge the extra valuable support given to the committee by Chris Shiller and Terry Haffern.
- The service leaders who led services so admirably, all without a Rabbi – Desiree and Terry Gelbart (Selichot), Pam Miller and Paul Wilton (Erev Rosh Hashanah), Chris Shiller and Rachel Zussman (Rosh Hashanah Morning), Paul Wilton and Elena Bloksberg (Kol Nidrei), Chris and Jessamie Milton (Yom Kippur morning), Terry Haffern and Naomi Johnson (Musaf and Mincha), Sue Pezaro and Roger Reynolds (Yizkor) and Desiree and Terry Gelbart (Neilah).
- Debbie Miller for leading the children's services on Zoom and for taking responsibility for the decoration of the sukkah and doing whatever else was needed.
- Our Torah readers – Chris Shiller (Rosh Hashanah), Norma Delgarno and Terry Gelbart (Yom Kippur), Michelle Wise and Roger Reynolds (Yom Kippur), Arie Rosen and Chris Shiller (Sukkot).
- Our Drash givers - Rabbi George Wielechowski and Chris Milton. Rabbi George also supplied our study material for Selichot which led to a very good discussion.
- Our shammashim – Lenny Bloksberg, Chris Milton, Trudi Sawyer, Chris Shiller, Terry Haffern and Dan Cohen.
- Our dedicated singers – Paul Wilton (leader), Pam Miller, Chris and Jessamie Milton, Terry Haffern, Chris Shiller, Trudi Sawyer, Desiree, Eddie and Terry Gelbart. The singing group practised week after week in preparation for the services. We thank Norma also for singing El Norah which is always a treat to hear.
- Our Shofar blowers and callers – Lenny Bloksberg, Anton Bruell, Elena Bloksberg and Phillip Gordon. Thank you to Elena for designing and making the masks for both shofar.

תודה רבה
Thank You

- Arie Rosen who led such an interesting study session.
- Our cellist for Kol Nidrei – Yotam Levy.
- Chris Milton for singing Kol Nidrei.
- Chris Shiller for preparing the break fast packs which were well received by those leaving Neilah.
- Dr Eddie Gelbart for giving us advice regarding safe practices during Alert Levels 3, 2+ and 2.
- The technical help people for online viewing assistance – Terry Gelbart (as well as for co-ordinating the overseas drash through the PA system), Naomi Johnson and David Kranz.
- Terry Gelbart for our posters.
- David Singer and the Burial and Benevolent society for organising Kver Avot.
- Trudi Sawyer and Chris Shiller for cleaning the silverware.
- Chris Shiller for organising the dry cleaning of the covers and curtain.
- Bill Merrill for schlepping machzorim from upstairs to downstairs and helping put up the sukkah.
- Christine O’Brien for her flexibility working whatever hours needed and help throughout the planning process.
- Olga Bernstein for being such a supportive President and the Board.
- Lenny Bloksberg for supplying the etrogim to supplement what we have on our shul tree and the willow and myrtle for the lulavim. We were even able to supply Temple Sinai and Waikato using Lenny’s etrogim.
- Shirley Fiddell for providing the palm.
- David Robinson for organising a drash from Rabbi Sergio Bergman, President of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, for Sukkot morning.
- Anyone else whom I may have inadvertently missed for which I apologise.

This long list shows just how many people were involved and also how many hats many people wore to make it all happen.

Addendum: And may we, the Ritual Committee, add a huge expression of appreciation to Naomi Johnson for her conscientiousness, perspicacity and extraordinary amount of dedicated work, without her this High Holy Day season would not have been the safe and successful undertaking that it has been.

Yom Kippur Morning Service Drash

with Chris Milton

Before I start this drash I want to be really clear about some terminology that I will be using. I shall use words such as “myth” and “mythic.” These words do not have their customary meaning, they do not mean something that is untrue or illusory. Quite the contrary! *Myth* creates a world of its own in accordance with a *spiritual* principle. *Myth describes things in terms of their emotional importance, their value, their motivational significance.*

I turn now to “Yom Kippur” – the Day of Atonement. “Atonement,” used to translate the Hebrew “Kippur” is an early 16th century word denoting unity or reconciliation, especially between God and man. Thus Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement can, in the words of Orthodox rabbi Abner Weiss, be understood as a religious day of at-one-ment^[i]. We come together with each other and with God. All of the preceding month of Elul, all of the Yamim Noraim, all of Rosh HaShannah and of Yom Kippur, all the actions we take in this time from the blowing of the shofar to fasting on Yom Kippur are spiritual exercises aimed at at-one-ment. Spirituality is fundamentally about an encounter with otherness and ultimately a state of being in which sense-of-self and other merge into at-one-ment.

An essential part of Yom Kippur is the notion of t’shuvah – return. We return to be at one with God. Yom Kippur is a day on which we look at where we have been, both as individuals but also as a community, to return to a spiritual and ethical life and to consider where we might be going. Spiritually it is a day on which we seek to return to God. But it is also a day that invites other types of return, and I am going to take this opportunity to ask where have we been as a community of Jews, where might we be going, how might we get there – why and to what and how might we return?

As a guide I suggest we think of finding the extraordinary in the ordinary, the sacred in the everyday. As a community that means rediscovering how to articulate what is extraordinary but hidden within the ordinary. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, said: *“It takes three things to attain a sense of significant being: God, A Soul, and a Moment. And the three are always here.”*

Here is how the Coen brothers articulated that in their film A Serious Man. The protagonist, Larry Gopnik sits talking to the junior rabbi, Scott Ginzler.

Larry: And she wants a Gett.

Rabbi Scott: A what?

Larry: She wants a-

Rabbi Scott: Oh, a Gett. Uh-huh, sure.

Larry: I feel like the carpet's been yanked out from under me. I don't know which end is up. I'm not even sure how to react; I'm too confused.

Rabbi Scott: What reasons did she give? For the rupture?

Larry: She didn't give-reasons. Just that, oh, you know, things haven't been going well.

Rabbi Scott: And is that true?

Larry: I guess. I don't know. She's usually right about these things.

Rabbi Scott: Yes, I can see.

Larry: I was hoping that... Rabbi Nachtner...

Rabbi Scott: That he would... yes?

Larry: Well, with the benefit of his life experience... no offence.

Rabbi Scott: No, of course not. I am the junior rabbi. And it's true, the point-of-view of somebody who's older and perhaps had problems might be more valid. And you should see the senior rabbi as well, by all means. Or even Marchik, if you can get in, he's quite busy. But maybe - can I share something with you? Because I too have had the feeling of losing track of Hashem, which is the problem here. I too have forgotten how to see Him in the world. And when that happens you think, well, if I can't see Him, He isn't there any more, He's gone. But that's not the case. You just need to remember how to see Him. Am I right? I mean, the parking lot here. Not much to see. But if you imagine yourself a visitor, somebody who isn't familiar with these... autos and such... somebody still with a capacity for wonder... Someone with a fresh... perspective. That's what it is, Larry.

Larry: Um...

Rabbi Scott: Because with the right perspective you can see Hashem, you know, reaching into the world. He is in the world, not just in shul. It sounds to me like you're looking at the world, looking at your wife, through tired eyes. It sounds like she's become a sort of... thing... a problem... a thing...

Larry: Well, she's, she's seeing Sy Ableman.

Rabbi Scott: Oh.

Rabbi Scott says of God "You just need to remember how to see Him." This is a place to start just how do we remember to experience the Divine in the everyday? I will recount and experience I had on Yom Kippur forty five years ago. In 1975 I attended Yom Kippur services at the large Orthodox shul in Durban. Rabbi Abner Weiss led this. At some point he asked us to all remain quite still and perhaps we would hear the ruach or spirit of the Divine enter the shul. The congregation fell silent. After a short pause a small child ran out of the ground floor level of the shul and the door swung open. For a moment the sound of a car outside was heard and then a wind seemed to blow in through the open door and enter the shul. In that moment there was ruach, a literal but also a spiritual wind, and I felt a rising sense of great otherness and warmth spread through my body which trembled with the sense of something greater than my sense of personal self. In the sound of wind I experienced the Divine in the everyday.

This was the same service in which Rabbi Weiss went on to say how Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement can be understood as a religious day of at-one-ment. For me this captures the essence of the High Holy Days - we come together with each other and with God. All of Elul, all of the Yamim Noraim, all of Rosh HaShannah and all of Yom Kippur, all the actions we take in this time from the blowing of the shofar to fasting on Yom Kippur are spiritual exercises. Spirituality is fundamentally about an encounter with otherness and ultimately a state of being in which we gain at-one-ment with otherness.

However, there is a problem with the implementation of this through organised religion. In various ways there always has been such a challenge but not quite of this shape. Today people are turning away from organised religion, we have lost track of the Divine, we have forgotten how to see the Divine in the world and if we cannot see the Divine then it seems that God is not there, God is gone. But that's not the case. We need to remember how to see the Divine in the world.

In most of the Western world organised religion is believed to be in recession. Judaism is no exception. Research[[ii](#)] has reported that almost a quarter of American Jews identify as "Jews of no religion" with no connection to Judaism except by ancestry. At the other end of the spectrum about a fifth indicate that they attend services at least once a week. Other research[[iii](#)] shows that overall, synagogue attendance and membership are down. This is despite synagogues of all denominations revitalizing their services, with an emphasis on spirited prayer, more music and social justice activities[[iv](#)]. We ourselves at Beth Shalom can probably testify to this troubling trend for our attendees at services are fewer and older than they were ten years ago. There are also fewer people at potluck meals, fewer people stepping up in various capacities, and a general disinterest in traditional practice, belief, literacy and sense of identity. We too puzzle about what it is that will vitalize services and encourage involvement in synagogue life[[v](#)].

The exact reasons for this recession are hard to discern. Probably the success of the natural scientific method and its focussed attention on the measurable physical world (but not the experiential world and the search for meaning) and the success of related technology has contributed to this. There are many other factors: a shift from small group bonding to more global relating, a shift from traditional family structure to non-traditional family structure (for Judaism this may include how we are distributed in a city), a shift from trust to loss of confidence in all institutions but particularly organised religion, and a shift from organised religion to more direct spirituality.

Much of this is reflected in younger people who, in the Western world at least, tend to be much less religious than older people. Whilst some young people maintain a nominal, often cultural affiliation to religion but nothing else, for instance, they enjoy celebrating the holidays but do not go to services and do not become involved in the organisation of religion^[vi]. Young people in particular have lost trust in the labour market, with government, in marriage and in other aspects of life. They are not as confident as older adults when it comes to institutions like the press, government and organised religion. Leadership amongst more traditional organised religion often takes conservative positions on such things as abortion, gay marriage, and other social issues. Furthermore, young people too often see organized religion connected to intolerance and abuse: images of Islamic jihadists attacking concertgoers in Paris, or conservative Christians opposing the rights of gay couples to marry. Young people have grown up valuing thinking for themselves, finding their own moral compass, and being non-conformist. Some create their own spirituality from elements of various religious or spiritual traditions: yoga, angels, or even secular culture like Harry Potter^[vii].

I think that there are however traces of religious disposition all around us and yet it is hiding in plain sight. To me the most obvious of these is the belief in conspiracy theories. That's a kind of religion. These hold a fascination for people that has a religious quality. Indeed it almost seems as if conspiracy theories are the new form of religion. We also see this fascination reflected in the interest in alien visitation. Documentaries about alien visitation are popular. People watch series such as : "Unsealed: Alien Files", "Top 10 Secrets and Mysteries", and "Ancient Aliens." The last of these is a blend of archaeology, serious scholarship and exotic speculation asserted as fact giving a mix of the believable with the not quite believable. Conspiracy theories too can have this mix of the believable and the not quite believable. We know this in psychology as the "minimally counterintuitive cognitive template" or MCI. Wev fasten onto those little mixes better than we do anything else and you can find this in most of these situations. A mixture of otherness which is at the heart of spirituality and religion. So what do we do, where do we go with this? Do we inhabit our religion imaginatively, as a lived mythology. Remember I mentioned Harry Potter, that's a mythology.

What does lighting the candles mean as a living mythic mode of being, what does singing chants that are thousands of years old and written in a script known to but a few people do for us? What does it mean. What we wear is mythically meaningful: Might you be some kind of Jewish Jedi knight when you done your tallis and could a child look forward to that as a numinous experience? Hebrew is a wonderous ancient language into which we are initiated. What you hear and what you sing is mythically and nostalgically meaningful: songs that feel like they go back to the encounter at Mt Sinai itself, haunting and moving to hear and to sing. Ancient familial roots and connections abound and wait to be discovered and fostered. We need to foster all of these, and more, for ourselves, each other, and our children. I propose that the way to do that is to feel in and find the beckoning Jewish otherness in yourself, to shape our ancient stories and highlight their mythic dimensions for young people (and ourselves), to find and create and learn music, to open ourselves to the frisson of paradox and experience of otherness.

So, I am going to give you an example of what I mean by this. I think that you can probably all recall that moment when Abraham is sitting outside his tent and he has a visit from the three messengers. How do we tell that story, how do we tell that story to ourselves, how do we tell it to our kids? Here is how we tell it, to ourselves at least. It's in Genesis 18:1 and 2[viii] which tells of Abraham's encounter with three angels: "And the Eternal appeared to him [Abraham] by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth." I am going to suggest that we mythologise, and here is my attempt to mythologise those two verses [music "The Lark Ascending" by Vaughn Williams]:

Camped amongst the Terebinths of Mamre and in pain, Abraham sat at the entrance to his tent. Despite the heat of the day he felt cold so he had the fire of Shitim wood stoked up in front of his tent. The smoke of the Shitim fire drifted into the tent, he enjoyed its smell and breathed deeply. Abraham became aware of a buzzing in his ears. This rose in intensity and then his body vibrated with the sound. Suddenly he felt as if his heart and breathing had stopped. What had really happened was that time had shifted and slowed for him. Abraham no longer felt quite in his body. The Terebinths of Mamre took on strange forms, waving to the rhythm of the sound. This sound was now unearthly, even heavenly, music. Somehow around him he felt the presence of the Divine. Looking up he saw three Wearers of the Malbush standing amongst the Terebinths. A doorway of flickering zigzag lines had opened within the trees and the three human forms were standing there. In a state of ecstasy Abraham rose and ran towards them. As he did so he saw that they wore robes that shimmered with glory and secret letters of fire. In the face of such glory he flung himself to the ground.

What I did was mythologise. And I think that we should think of mythologising everything: our stories, our attire, our services, our songs, everything. To bring back that frisson and reencounter the other and have at-one-ment.

[i] Kippur (כִּפּוּר) comes from a root that means "to cover over, pacify, make propitiation" but in English is properly translated as "to atone"

[ii] 2013 Pew Report

[iii] Jack Wertheimer <https://www.cjnews.com/culture/books-and-authors/lockshin-rabbis-and-synagogues-should-stick-to-their-strengths>

[iv] The decrease in belief in the supernatural elements of religiosity leads to a belief system that is more morally grounded. Thus there is an increasingly popular inclination to espouse liberal causes. In Judaism this is justified by the notion of tikkun olam. However, it does not seem to have very much of a beneficial effect on religious engagement. Other religious institutions, such as mainstream Protestants and Catholics, who do the same thing are in serious decline. I have to wonder do such movements confuse cause and effect: social justice is not the cause of spirituality it is the extraverted consequence of it. That also begs the question of what room there is for spiritual introverts in organised religion.

[v] It is also true to say that some argument can be made for the opposite. There are some exceptions to the religious recession: both fundamentalist movements and the secular religion, conspiracy theories, have grown. We may learn something from this. Atheism is in decline in some situations; a long view of American church attendance over the last two hundred years shows increased proportional church attendance; after the collapse of the Soviet Union involvement with the Orthodox Russian Church increased; in France Catholic Church attendance has seen a rise as has evangelical Christianity in Germany; the number of Chinese Christians has increased significantly as have those in South Korea. Furthermore, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. In Israel the number of Charedi Jews is rising rapidly although they do lose members. Some of the growth is due to high birth rates in the population, e.g. in Islam and Charedi Judaism, but it is notable that much of this growth is in more fundamentalist religions.

[vi] I must mention that there is a positive side to children who are not raised religiously. Such children seem to be less judgemental, more tolerant of diversity and more resistant to peer pressure than their religious peers[vi]. Perhaps we need to think about and learn something from this.

[vii] Despite the religious recession there are advantages to religious engagement. Spirituality aside, religious engagement is generally beneficial - those who are active in religious congregations tend to be happier, are more likely than those who are unaffiliated to vote in elections, tend to be involved in community groups or volunteer organizations, tend to enjoy better physical and mental health and live longer. However, these benefits may stem from the social support offered by and experienced in religious communities rather than religion per se.

[viii] "Then the Eternal appeared to Abraham by the Terebinths of Mamre in the heat of the day, while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent. And Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby." There are several commentaries on this piece of text. According to Nachmanides[viii]: "Wherever angels are referred to by the word "men," as in this passage [Genesis 18], the story of Lot, and the verses, "a man wrestled with him" (Gen. 32:25), as well as, "a man came upon him" (Gen. 37:15), according to our Rabbis (Tanchuma Va-Yeshev 2), in all these cases there was a special glory (kavod) created in the angels - called by those who know the mysteries of the Torah a "garment" (ha-malbush) - that can be perceived by human eyes in the purest of souls, such as the righteous and the sons of prophets, although I cannot be more explicit."

Education Update



It is that time of year again. You think I am talking about Sukkot well no, those are connected to the agricultural calendar of Israel and a succa was a type of structure designed so we could sleep and eat in the fields and complete the grape harvest, the last harvest in the Israeli agricultural calendar.

We however live in NZ where all the seasons are just the opposite of the agricultural calendar in Israel. We are coming into spring planting and it is time to plant trees and our gardens and plan for the bounty that the good earth can deliver to us.

We will be celebrating succot on Friday October 2 at 6.30pm.

October 4-9th. 11am. Puppets and Costumes in the Succa, meeting up for lunch and play.

Bring your own lunch and we can eat and play with the puppets in the succa.



November 13, Meditation Kabbalat Shabbat



with Rabbi JoEllen Duckor.

JoEllen has served Temple Sinai in Wellington as the Mashpiah or spiritual director for 15 years. She received her certification as a Jewish meditation teacher from the Institute of Jewish Spirituality in New York. JoEllen received private rabbinic ordination in 2017.



October 18th Beth Shalom Sunday School Term 4

We are out of lockdown and heading back to Sunday School in person versus on Zoom.

We will studying Hebrew and Jewish Studies along with great baking and crafts time during morning tea.

See you all on Sunday at 9.30am for tefillot. All students welcome whether it is your first time or you have been with us all year.

November 6th, Friday night pot luck dinner with Sunday school participating in the service and Games night that follows.

Saturday November 7th and December 5th Shabbat Kat in the Library

Beth Shalom Excel

Is a new program on Wednesdays and Thursdays after school. We offer tutoring in Math, English, Writing, Science, Coding, Video/Film making and speaking/drama. If you are interested email educator@bethshalom.org.nz



December 16th-24th

16th December Wednesday Bowling "Maccabees vs the Greeks (Seleucids)"

17th December Thursday Ice Skating "The Great Jewish Escape"

18th December Friday Cooking and Baking "Challah, strudel and Cholent Challenge"

19th December Saturday Shabbat "Mt Sinai on the Volcano" No cost

20th December Sunday Movie Day "Mulan" "Heroes and Heroines when is it right to defend yourself"

21st December Monday Swimming Pool at Panmure Pools "The Talmud says teach your child to swim".

22nd December Tuesday Rainbows End.

23rd December Wednesday Waiheke Island boat trip and hike "IN the Beginning God Created".

24th December Thursday Auckland Museum Scavenger Hunt "Finding Jewish History in the Museum".

Parents are invited if the child is under 5 or needs special supervision.

Bring your own lunch. Morning tea is provided.

Rainy day alternative is games or crafts day at Beth Shalom

Please email educator@bethshalom.org.nz to sign up.

Cost \$25/day plus entrance fees to any activity (pay in advance. Scholarships are available).

Early arrival and late fees apply for parents who need extra time.

Transport; Meet up and pick up at the location

Beth Shalom Hebrew/Sunday School, Contact: educator@bethshalom.org.nz

Ph: 027 765 3677. Your place to make friends and build community.

Auckland Jewish Burial & Benevolent Society

It was wonderful to hear and feel the warmth of the Beth Shalom community through virtual High Holiday services even though we couldn't physically be together.

I listened to an interview on Radio NZ with Hinemoa Elder, a Maori psychiatrist, talking about the importance of Māori proverbs or Whakataukī. She described these as comments from the past on the present, a code for experiencing love, or aroha, within ourselves at a time of significant stress and pressure. She also commented on the emphasis in English proverbs on written word compared with the importance of the spoken word in Māori, for example: sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me (words have no power); the kumara never says how sweet it is (meaning: a person never sings their own praise).

One of the most significant aspects of the Yom Kippur service is that the selichot prayers are said communally. Together we atone for many possible sins, whether we have committed them personally or not. The power of speaking these words aloud, and together, highlights the sharing of responsibility that is the essence of a community; we are affected by each other's challenges and adversity just as we celebrate our communal and our individual achievements together.

The communal prayers also recognise how difficult it can be to articulate our own needs; it is easier to do so in the safety and anonymity of a group. At this time, when the world is challenged on such a huge scale by Covid-19 and its wide ranging economic and personal impact, it is easy to minimise our own difficulties and we can feel hesitant to ask for assistance. We encourage anyone who needs financial assistance at this time to contact the B and B on a confidential basis. The B and B is grateful for the generosity of those who donated to its Annual Appeal, enabling us to care for our members.



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Book list - a new list of titles to choose from...

The People of the Book - Geraldine Brooks

The Weight of Ink, Rachel Kadish

The Finkler Question - Howard Jacobson

Light Fell - Evan Fallenberg

Rashi's Daughters - Maggie Anton

Driving to Treblinka, Diana Wichtel

Feverish - Gigi Fenster

Poems About the House - Carol Millner

The Intentions Book - Gigi Fenster

Days are Like Grass - Sue Younger

Jerusalem - Yotam Ottolenghi (cookbook)

The Book of Jewish Food - Claudia Roden (cookbook)

Feast - Nigella Lawson (cookbook)

How to run a Jewish Household - Blu Greenberg

The History of the Jews - Paul Johnson

J - Howard Jacobson]

The Story of the Jews - Simon Schama

Jerusalem - Simon Sebag Montefiore

Community Care

Hi Everyone,

Hope you are well, and keeping fingers crossed we will soon be back at Level 1. Although allowing us a lot more freedom, when we are at 1, it is still not 0 and we still need to exercise caution.

Unfortunately, some people are thinking the crisis is over, and are being very cavalier with their behaviour. NOT a good idea. This is an unknown virus that scientists are still learning about, and it certainly is not a virus we can afford to take chances with, and get complacent about too soon. The last thing we want is to go backwards, AGAIN!

Community Care is still here to help any needs you may have, but have to know about them in order to do so. Don't be shy about asking for help, it is all strictly confidential.

The Telephone Tree is doing a great job, and if you are not being rung, but would like to be, contact us to get on the list and be included. While talking to your Tree contact, let them know if you need any help, that is part of the purpose for the call. Maybe you would like a visit, if you feel lonely

Take care all of you, and stay safe.

Best wishes from **Lita and the Community Care Team**

Contact: Chris Shiller 021 177 4934 shiller@iorcon.net.nz

Lorna Orbell 022 026 2899 chaim@slingshot.co.nz

Lita Summerfield 021 297 9462 (TEXT ONLY) serendipitylins40@gmail.com

Or contact the office 09 524 4139



2020 VISION

SUNDAY
8 NOV
2020

UPJ VIRTUAL BIENNIAL

Dear friends,

We warmly invite you to join with your friends and community for our first Virtual Biennial on **Sunday 8 November**.

Over one day of sessions we will present a **compelling vision of Progressive Judaism for 2020 and beyond**, and new ways to grow and strengthen your community and your congregation.

We are delighted that **Rabbi Sharon Brous** will present a welcome address at the beginning of the Virtual Biennial. Rabbi Brous launched and leads IKAR, one of the fastest growing congregations in the US today. Her TED Talk, "It's time to reclaim religion", has had 1.4 million views on YouTube and has been translated into 23 languages. Rabbi Brous will also be our guest presenter "in person" at the UPJ Biennial in October 2021.

There will be **pre- and post-Biennial events**, including a Kabbalat Shabbat service from Singapore, Havdalah co-hosted by North Shore Temple Emanuel and Temple Beth Israel in honour of their 60th and 90th anniversaries, and a post-conference concert hosted by Emanuel Synagogue.

The UPJ Biennial is open to anyone interested in envisioning our Jewish future.

Our dedicated Virtual Biennial page on the UPJ website provides information about the exciting program. The registration fee allows us to provide reliable and high-quality streaming and opportunities to work together online.

With your support and participation, the Virtual Biennial will allow us to connect with Progressive Jews from across Australia, Asia, New Zealand and worldwide.

We hope you can join us!

Sincerely,

David Knoll AM and Brian Samuel OAM, UPJ Co-Presidents

Susan Kadar, UPJ Biennial Chair

For more Information visit the Virtual Biennial web page: <https://upj.org.au/virtual-biennial> including:

- Registration fees
- Program highlights
- FAQs
- Link to **Register Now: <https://events.humanitix.com/upj-virtual-biennial-virtual-vision>**

Registration deadline: 23 October 2020

Community Security Group

Community Security Group

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CSG is looking for more people!

THE COMMUNITY NEEDS US – WE NEED YOU.

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to contribute to your community then please
contact the CSG using the details above.**