

All,

Last May, when national attention first turned to us, the *Forward* collected thoughts from Jewish clergy around the country, to help frame and guide us. Rabbi Latz contributed and you can find the article [here](#). A year later, I added the following challenge from [Rabbi Jason Rubenstein](#) to my Haggadah:

“Look, I’d love to be able to tell you how Judaism is all about justice, and Hillel said ‘more justice, more peace,’ and Heschel marched at Selma, so we’re not like those bad religious groups. But that’s self-satisfied and self-serving. The Torah also gave the world the concept of divinely mandated genocide, and black-letter Jewish law shockingly allows Jews to subject their non-Jewish (chattel) slaves to degrading labor, the kind that the Egyptians imposed on our ancestors. It was Maimonides who first confronted Judaism’s own racist texts of terror head-on in a set of courageous essays that balanced realism and aspiration. We should follow his path of painful introspection, with the humble resolve that we have a great deal of internal work to do—textually, institutionally, and culturally—to become real allies in the fight against the evil of racism.”

Board updates

Three updates from the board’s April meeting:

First, the board received an in-depth presentation of the work-in-progress that will become the proposed budget for 2021-22 (our fiscal year ends June 30). Our single most important source of income is your contributions. All of those shekels allow us to support all of our people and our programs. If you’d like to update or increase your contribution, please contact Executive Director [Alison](#). Even as a relatively small organization, we get a lot of stuff done for a lot of people. The income side is modest, the expense side is ambitious, the budget is balanced, and the output is tremendous.

Second, thank you to Jeff Danovsky and Bonnie Westlin for chairing the Nominating Committee as we launched our first year of open applications for board membership. We had multiple candidates for each of our open seats, each of them talented and dedicated to Shir Tikvah. Jeff and Bonnie were joined by Nominating Committee members Julie Jacobs, Tamar Ghidalia, John Walthour, Robert Rothstein, and Anne Trockman, who helped develop and implement the first phase of this new process. They will complete their work shortly and introduce the slate of candidates before the June 6, 2021 annual meeting.

Third, the first mile marker on the road out of COVID-land for Shir Tikvah—the road where we travel as we expand what we’re able to do in person—will be the vaccination of our staff. Vaccinations are becoming more readily available, and several staff members have already been jabbed. Hold on, hold on, we’re getting there!

Bylaws

Thank you to everyone who has voted already to permit our June 6, 2021 annual meeting to be held using remote technology. In just two weeks, we have received enough votes to pass the amendment. Assuming that there isn’t a flood of “no” votes out there before voting closes at month’s end (and we’ve received zero so far), we should be on Zoom for the annual meeting.

As noted last month, and the subject of several of my recent letters, an amended bylaws proposal has been unanimously approved by the board for your ultimate consideration and approval. We will be sending the congregation an easily digestible summary of the changes and setting up ways to share fuller information with those who wish it. Keep an eye on your inbox. Feel free to [contact me](#) now if you’ve got thoughts on this subject.

Speaker series: The Brave Questions Project

Last fall, [Michael Twitty](#) responded positively to a social media picture of Rabbi Latz wearing a gift I'd given him, an [amusing facemask](#)* of Nancy Pelosi throwing shade. I suggested to the Rabbi that he invite the genius Black Jewish culinary historian to lead us for services and the Rabbi did and Mr. Twitty accepted. The convenience of Zoom brought us a distinguished guest and mighty teacher, with no plane flights needed or allowed. (*The amusing facemask is sold out—and the link takes you to Swish Embassy, which has many other pleasing products, some perhaps a little more mature in nature than the one I bought for the rabbi.)

Rabbi Latz and I had so much fun with that event that we kept going. I hope you were able to join us in early March for Robbie Kaplan and Amy Spitalnick with [Integrity First for America](#) (suing white supremacists) and last week for [Dr. Christina Farhart](#) (anti-semitism and conspiracy theories) for the speaker series that Rabbi Latz has now titled "The Brave Questions Project."

This month, keep your eyes on your inbox for details about the **Wednesday, April 28 at 7 pm** conversation between longtime friend of Shir Tikvah [Daniel Shapiro](#) (Obama-era U.S. ambassador to Israel) and [Dr. John Ghazvinian](#), the author of the recently published, extensive history of U.S.-Iran relations. The book, which got excellent [reviews](#), can be bought [here](#) or [here](#).

In June, look to join us for a talk with [Rabbi Mike Moskowitz](#), an Orthodox rabbi and a progressive advocate for trans rights and a vocal ally for LGBTQ inclusivity in Judaism. He is the Scholar-in-Residence for Trans and Queer Jewish Studies at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah.

Spring Gala! Awards!

It's Shir Tikvah's Spring Event, featuring Moth-style storytelling on the topic "It Saved My Life: A Jewish Story." We'll be on Zoom on Sunday May 2 at 5 pm. [Please RSVP today](#). At that event we will also give the Shir Tikvah Visionary Leadership Award to the faculty of the Jewish Academy of Moral Imagination and to the Design and Dream Team Co-Chairs on behalf of the whole team. We will also present the Jim and Andrea Rubenstein Radical Hospitality Award to Gayle Zoffer.

Updated directory

Get your updated Shir Tikvah Directory! If you have a paper copy that's been sitting around at home, it's likely out of date. Please email [Sara Lahyani](#) for a new electronic copy! Please note, the directory is for social, not commercial, purposes.

Meet some members, new and old!

This month I'm happy to briefly introduce several folks who have joined our Shir Tikvah community. Whenever we are next able to gather, please show off some radical hospitality with a warm "hello." And I will continue introducing established members too, as long as I have bios to share.

Meet new members Kris Walser (he/him) and Kerrie Amar (she/her). Kris writes he's "new-and-improved from my conversion to Judaism," while Kerrie reports she's "Jewish by birth and born in Israel." They share that "depending on the time of year, you can find us either in Minnesota or North Carolina somewhere outside riding the motorcycle, grilling, on the lake or spending time with family. We are excited to be part of the Shir Tikvah community and cannot wait until we can gather together!"



Welcome to Lisa Bevevino (she/her) and daughter Elisabeth. She shared that community-building, reading, research, and writing are integral parts of her spiritual life at Shir Tikvah. Lisa teaches and researches French, Latin, and Medieval Studies at the University of Minnesota Morris and is so happy to be able to be involved with Shir Tikvah from a short-ish distance! Elisabeth is a student in the *Talmidimot* class and enjoys reading, playing the piano, and entertaining her cats. Supportive partner and father Aaron Wenzel sometimes attends with Lisa and Elisabeth. The family also just welcomed Nicholas Shugert Bevevino-Wenzel (left) and Andrew Walter Bevevino-Wenzel (right).



Beckie Skelton (she/her) and Shep Harris (he/him) have been Shir Tikvah members since 1997. From 1997-2000, they served as STiFTY advisors—a role that seemed natural given that they met chaperoning a confirmation class retreat in northern Virginia! After getting married at Shir Tikvah in 1999, they raised their children at the synagogue. Avital (19) is at DePaul University in Chicago, Solomon (16) is a junior at Armstrong, and Abie (14) is an 8th grader at the Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School (where Beckie is the Institutional Advancement Director). Shep is the Mayor of Golden Valley, as well as a member of the Government Relations practice at Fredrikson and Byron. What Beckie and Shep love most about Shir Tikvah are the social justice values, the amazing chavurah that they and a group of synagogue friends formed in 2002 (and is still going strong today), and the music and spirituality of Friday night services. They also appreciated the wonderful support of the community during Shep’s bout with cancer last fall. (This photo is from Abie’s Bar Mitzvah in December 2019).



I’d love to include you and your houseplants, children, pets, hobbies, quirks, etc. in the next letter. As always, feel free to [contact me!](#)

Bruce

