

December 2019 Congregational Letter from Board President Bruce Manning

All,

I write this from an AirBnB on the Mississippi River about two hours north of the Twin Cities. From the breakfast nook, I have a panoramic view of the river, which over the course of the weekend has changed from turbulent to ice-covered, and snow is now piling high in places. It is a good time to remember warmer weather. The warmest I've ever experienced was at the Dead Sea where it hit 122° as I floated, caked in spa mud. While it is for the sensation of being hot that I now think back on that 2014 trip, those 11 days in Israel have affected me in many more profound ways.

It was the first trip there for me and my family and for my mother as we joined 31 other friends and members of Shir Tikvah on the multi-generational congregational trip. Although it had been talked at me for years, it was by visiting Israel that I actually began to understand Israel's importance to me, a member of the European-Jewish diaspora with no intention then or now of making [aliyah](#). By driving, I understood just how narrow and fragile the country is, from the western boundary of Jerusalem to the Mediterranean Sea. By seeing, I had to wrestle with the wall, both its harm and the security it provides some. By listening, I grasped more of thousands of years of history than I'd been able to hold before. We walked stony streets, admired the technology and innovation nestled up against ancient cityscapes, ate amazing food, heard and felt the press of languages and cultures, prayed, relaxed, connected, read, studied, and came back amazed at all that Israel has to offer—its intensity and its complexity. For some, Israel is an easy love affair. For me, it is a vibrant, engaging, frustrating puzzle, one that has called me back two times since as I continue to try to figure out my relationship with its past and its future.

There's a spot in Jerusalem from which you can see the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](#), the [Al-Aqsa Mosque](#), and the location of the [Kotel](#) (the Western or Wailing Wall). These three spots are holy, personally or culturally, to about 4 billion people. And there you are, perhaps enraged that women cannot [pray at the Wall](#) or perhaps thinking about that amazing falafel lunch cooked up by a [Druze](#) restaurateur or perhaps marveling at the array of furry hats worn by the ultra-orthodox even in the height of summer and how alien they seem to you or perhaps remembering the artsy graffiti and the gay bars of Tel Aviv or perhaps wishing you'd studied more about Armenians (who have a portion of the old city) or perhaps planning which souvenirs to buy at the *shouk* (the old markets) or perhaps amazed at the calm of a Shabbat in the only majority Jewish country or perhaps revved up to call for the best of Jewish values to be better embodied in the Jewish state... or perhaps all of those things at once. You still have time to join [Rabbi Latz](#) and the Simon-Latz family [this summer](#) and come share with us what you learn!

Facilities update

You should know that the status of Minnehaha Creek Parkway in the Park Board's master plan remains in doubt: it appears there might someday be a road closure right at Shir Tikvah. More information is [here](#). In other news, we continue to work with Cushman & Wakefield to see what's out in the market to buy or lease and I thank Kay Harris for taking the lay leader role in that work.

Board updates

We are a covenantal Jewish community who live out our Jewish commitments through the study of Torah, prayer, caring for each other, and working for justice and healing in our world. Our congregants make our community by building relationships with each other and in service to Shir Tikvah for the collective good. Our board lives out our covenant as fiduciaries of this *kehillah kedosha* (holy community). Collectively, we live out our covenant through acts of good stewardship for future generations.

We have spent some time over the last few meetings developing these four ways in which the board will focus our efforts on covenant for 5780:

1. **Deepen member engagement.** How have we created infrastructure for all members (new and veteran) to engage in the visionary work of Shir Tikvah (Radical Hospitality, Torah study, *t'filah*, building a beloved community, & justice work) and to grow our commitments and leadership in this holy work? (Or, in what ways have we built a community where everyone sees themselves as the 10th person in our minyan?)
2. **Lift up lifelong learning.** What progress have we made and where are we heading in our work to build an ever-more robust and visionary Jewish education program and the infrastructure to support it?
3. **Strengthen financial health.** How have we built towards a healthy, robust, inspiring, and transparent culture of sustainable giving and financial well-being for Shir Tikvah? (The why, what, & how of moneytalk.)
4. **Improve communications.** How are we communicating more effectively with the congregation about our vision, values, priorities, and needs?

As always, feel free to [contact me](#).

In hope,
Bruce

