

All,

July is often the calm before the proverbial Shir Tikvah storm. Forrest Yesnes and his talented team have closed the school year, the *b'mitzvah* calendar goes into a brief hibernation, the staff has closed 2020-21's books, the Rabbis and staff take some staggered time off. And what comes next? A new school year, High Holy Days, the minting of new Jewish adults! And, joyfully, our current plans for a phased [reopening](#) starting in August (woohoo!) and hybrid High Holy Days with in-person opportunities.

In-person worship

Keep an eye on your inbox for High Holy Day in-person worship at St. Joan of Arc, which will go out in the next few days. And Shabbat service sign-ups (prioritizing those observing *yahrzeits*) will go out later this month. We must remain diligent and committed to our values of care and community, but Shir Tikvah is slowly coming back to in-person visits!

You may recall I promised new easily cleanable chairs, thanks to a grant from the Minneapolis Jewish Federation. The chairs are still coming, but selection and supply chain issues mean your *tuchus* may spend some more time in the orangey-brown seats you know and love.

Board updates

There is no July board meeting so I don't have much to report outside of what you already see in your e-news. The board spent the second June board meeting (to go along with the annual meeting) studying Talmud! How nice it is to immerse ourselves in the deep traditions that guide and teach us.

New hire!



I do want to welcome a familiar staff person into a new role: Raena Davison (she/her) has just started as our new Communications and Development Manager, after a public job posting and interviewing several candidates. If you're a parent with kids enrolled in the Jewish Academy for Moral Imagination (JAMI, our religious school), you may already know her from her inclusion work there. She started as the part-time Inclusion and Wellness Coordinator in 2016 and then became JAMI's Assistant Director; that work will continue while she moves to full-time with this exciting new portfolio. In this role, Raena will be responsible for managing the website, email campaigns, event publications, and marketing materials. She will also support the development efforts, including fundraising and grant writing. Raena was recently the Dean of Operations and Communications at Agamim Classical Academy, where her work covered their communications and fundraising portfolios. Raena has a B.A. in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies and reports that she "cherishes time cultivating a big garden, camping on the North Shore, and being in community (especially with youth!)."

Shir Tikvah has long needed the work that Raena will deliver, knitting together our community. Thank you for approving this new position at the June annual meeting, as part of the current budget.

Meet some members!

Members new and old, please use this monthly letter as a chance to introduce yourselves. [Send me](#) a few sentences and a picture! Baby news is also welcome!



“We’re the Schwartz-Leclercq family, enjoying our membership at Shir Tikvah since 2014. Sego (she/her), Edan, (he/him), Ari (9), Navah (almost 4) and Gadi (2.5) love eating home-baked challah for Shabbat, singing Hanukkah songs and inviting friends to our Sukkah. We revel in the vibrant diversity of people, stages of life, hobbies, beliefs and opinions present at Shir Tikvah and are looking forward to hugging many of you when covid-possible.”

[I will add that Sego learned in last month’s letter that she’s colleagues with new member Kethan Pradham and reached out to him at work. This inspired her to submit her family’s bio; let’s make some connections!]



Sara Knauz (she/they) writes “I attend ST events regularly on zoom these days, where you might catch a glimpse of my tabbycat, Dibs, or my partner, Alexander. I never expected to join a congregation. I grew up knowing my mom is Jewish, stumbling through the Khanike [a.k.a. Chanukah] blessings’ transliterations together, and knowing I have an uncle in Israel. What I didn’t know is that halfway through my PhD in cognitive psychology, I would watch a Jewish a cappella song on YouTube, see these Jews’ visible kippot, get a sudden suckerpunch of shame, and have an identity crisis. Did I learn to be embarrassed of visible Jewishness from my assimilated Jewish American family? Seeking to foster pride in my heritage, I started learning. I learned that Shir Tikvah was

founded by the first out lesbian Rabbi (every/anywhere, to my knowledge) and included chutzpah in the motto. I started attending Friday Shabbat services. I’ve picked up much of the Kabbalat Shabat and Havdallah liturgy by now. I love the music, the queerness, the lifelong learning courses, the emphasis on justice and activism, and the friendships. For something I never knew was missing from my life, I now have great pride in my Jewish family and in our Jewish tradition. And I’m excited for more.”

The “first out lesbian Rabbi,” Sara writes about, who was the first such rabbi hired by a mainstream



denominational shul, is our founding Rabbi, Rabbi Stacy Offner. She has just become Rabbi Emerita at her home after Shir Tikvah, Temple Beth Tikvah in Madison, Connecticut. I know many grateful and inspired Shir Tikvah members were able to participate by Zoom in a celebration of her rabbinate at the end of June. Thank you, *todah rabah*, to Rabbi Offner for having the vision that launched Shir Tikvah and the care and compassion that tended those flowers into our entire garden.

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

Bruce

