

All,

Last month, I started my congregational letter with a pitch to join our [2020 Israel trip](#). I added a bit of color about the wonders of Jerusalem, listing among the sights and contradictions the restrictions on women praying at the Wall and the ultra-orthodox in their mid-summer furry hats who might seem “alien” to a participant on the Shir Tikvah trip. And while they might seem so, they are also our sibling Jews and violence against them is violence against us. With attacks on the ultra-orthodox in New York, with the shocking vandalism at a Persian Jewish synagogue in Los Angeles, my heart has ached, the back of my neck has tingled. We also mourn and honor Anton Wallace and Richard White, killed at West Freeway Church of Christ while performing volunteer security services for their congregation.

As I have noted before, it was not part of our strategic plan as a Board or part of the arc of our moral teachings to devote so much of our time and our dollars to security concerns. It is painful to have to do so now. Shir Tikvah’s security efforts for our most high-traffic times have continued to strengthen and improve, including in ways that I should not detail in public letters. We will be inviting additional members into the process in the coming weeks and are currently planning a series of related congregational meetings.

In the wake of the murders in November 2018 in Pittsburgh, Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer, President of the [Hartman Institute](#) (where Rabbi Latz was a multi-year fellow), wrote the following reflection. I believe it succinctly raises up the challenges our current environment presents as we see to our short-term needs and our long-term projects:

A sad truth: I think the major Jewish communal and institutional response to Pittsburgh is going to be a concern for and an amplification of security measures in and around Jewish institutions. And while I do not make light of the need for such measures, and in fact I rely on them—in my organization’s budget and at its front doors, at the visibly Jewish schools my children attend, at our synagogue; and while I think it is totally legitimate for the Jewish people to be a little more adamant about our embodied dignity—I really fear, and lament, that we will misunderstand these measures by seeing them and taking pride in them as a response to the tragedy, rather than what they are: a concession to American toxicities that we understand ourselves as powerless to actually defeat.

We have built our synagogue to welcome the wandering and the wondering and to create a relevant and animated Jewish life. While we are making “concessions” and adapting to our new reality, we have and we will stand in the holy spaces we have built together. We refuse to be shaken in our commitments to our faith, to our siblings, and to our work to repair the world. With that in mind, I want to call your attention to a few events this month.

Shir Tikvah is co-sponsoring a **World Without Genocide** program this month: “Collaborating with the Enemy: Jews, Nazis, and Echoes for Today” which will happen **Thursday, January 23, 7:00-9:00 pm** at Mitchell Hamline Law School. More information, including pre-registration, is [here](#).

To kick off a weekend of programming, on **Friday, January 31st**, Shir Tikvah welcomes **Eric Ward**, a community organizer and national expert on the relationship between hate violence, democratic institutions and inclusive societies. He will deliver the sermon, “Cry Unto Pharaoh—Resisting White Nationalism,” and Rabbi Lekach-Rosenberg will interview him after the *oneg* about strategies to challenge white nationalism, antisemitism and racism and the work needed to build a world of equity and justice. In preparation, I give my very highest recommendation to Mr. Ward’s article “Skin in the Game,” an engaging and not-too-lengthy read, found [here](#).

Other items, briefly

- [Theodor Herzl’s World Zionist Congress](#) distributes \$1B of aid to Jewish causes through an every-five-years international conference in Israel. How that money is distributed depends on the votes of elected delegates. If you’re over 18, you can vote, from January 21 to March 11. Rabbi Latz is standing for the Hatikvah slate, a progressive coalition of Jewish human rights organizations including, JStreet, T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, and the New Israel Fund, which hopes to “steer funding away from Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank and toward causes like expanding rights for women and minorities.” More information on this slate is [here](#) and voting information (which has a nominal fee) will be available at Shir Tikvah.
- The Board is still at work on the problems of our facilities. A few folks have asked whether remodeling our current space remains a viable option. Yes, but the high expense/low yield challenges remain (see [this presentation](#) starting at page 5). Angel donors are welcome to contact [Alison Olig](#). The Board still has remodeling on its radar. We are also continuing to explore partnerships, leases, and acquisitions.
- Park Board President Brad Bourn says he does not expect the Southwest parks strategic planning committee’s recommendations to touch traffic on our corner, but the final report is due later this month and we will keep you posted.
- Our strategic youth education visioning work continues apace. Thank you to Dana Bennis and Melissa Machovsky for taking leadership in that work, along with Rabbi Latz and Forrest Yesnes, with assistance from intern Ari Weinstein.

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

In hope,
Bruce