

HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

Bulletin

MEANINGFUL MEMBERSHIP 5780



MEANINGFUL MEMBERSHIP

Holy Days and Festivals 5781*

Selichot | September 12, 2020

Rosh Hashanah | September 18-20, 2020

Yom Kippur | September 27-28, 2020

Sukkot | October 2-9, 2020

Shemini Atzeret | October October 9-10, 2020

Simchat Torah | October 10-11, 2020

Chanukah | December 10-18, 2020

Tu BiShvat | January 27-28, 2021

Purim | February 25-26, 2021

Pesach | March 27 - April 3, 2021

Yom HaShoah | April 8-9, 2021

Yom HaZikaron & Yom HaAtzmaut | April 15-17, 2021

Lag BaOmer | April 29-30, 2021

Yom Yerushalayim | May 9-10, 2021

Shavuot | May 16-17, 2021

Tisha B'Av | July 17-18, 2021

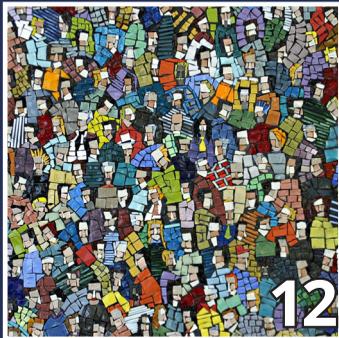
**Holidays begin at sundown on the first date listed above*



9



11



12



18



19



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On the cover: Every Saturday before Shabbat Morning Services, our congregants join our virtual Torah Study with Rabbi Yael Splansky. We are blessed that we can continue these meaningful and impactful programs & services during the pandemic.

June is Pride Month! Holy Blossom Temple celebrates Pride and honours our LGBTQIP2SAA community.

WHERE WE CAN SET DOWN OUR BURDENS AND DISCOVER SPARKS OF MEANING AND LIGHT

Rabbi Yael Splansky, Senior Rabbi

RABBINIC REFLECTION



On the Sixth Day of Creation, when Adam was created, he saw the sun going down as an ever-deepening gloom enveloped the world. Adam's heart grew heavy and his mind filled with terror, as he presumed this would be an eternal darkness. God saw his suffering and endowed Adam with the divine intuition to innovate. What did Adam do? He took up two stones – the name of one stone was Darkness and the name of the other was Shadow of Death. He rubbed them together until sparks were created. Fire was discovered. It was enough light for Adam to find hope through the darkness and warmth through the long night. Thereupon Adam exclaimed with joyful gratitude: “Baruch Atah, Adonai! Praised are You, O God, Creator of Light!” (Babylonian Talmud, Avodah Zarah 8b)

For three months now we each have been carrying many burdens – a global pandemic, environmental fragility, racial injustices, financial strains, existential loneliness and anxiety, worry about how our children and grandchildren will find their way in this broken world. Some days it feels like too much. Like Adam, we see shadows cast over our world. We feel helpless, sometimes hopeless to do anything about it. But we, too, have been blessed with the God-given gift of knowing how to innovate. The names of the two heavy stones we lift up now may be: “Fear” and “Loneliness” or “Uncertainty” and “Grief”, but when we strike them together we discover sparks of light that can be enough to sustain us until sunrise. Unlike Adam who was ignorant of the daily cycles, we know the sun will rise.

Over these three long months I have watched with wonder and pride at the many ways our Holy Blossom community helps one another to carry the burdens of the day. The stones called “Frustration” and “Disappointment,” “Isolation” and “Anxiety” are made lighter when we belong to a sacred community. I see evidence of the sparks of sanctity every day – in our daily prayers, in our congregant-led support groups, in our opportunities for life-long learning from our Little Blossoms to our HABSTY Teens to our Melton Graduates. I witness how we lighten one another's burdens through generosity for those with

financial hardship, by joining in a simcha that had to be celebrated under restrictions, by the thousands of phone calls that are made congregant to congregant simply to ask: “How are you?”

The innovations of our online congregation have proven to create life-affirming sparks of courage and connection, spiritually sustaining sparks of uplift and strength, values-driven sparks of learning, love and loyalty are the result. And these are enough to see us through until dawn.

There is promise on the horizon now. Suddenly, there is a growing sense that we have made it through the worst of it and there is reason to be hopeful. These days remind me of this beautiful and haunting poem.

Try to Praise the Mutilated World

By Adam Zagajewski, translated from Polish by Clare Cavanagh

*Try to praise the mutilated world.
Remember June's long days,
and wild strawberries, drops of rosé wine.
The nettles that methodically overgrow
the abandoned homesteads of exiles....*

*.... You should praise the mutilated world.
Remember the moments when we were together
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.
Return in thought to the concert where music flared.
You gathered acorns in the park in autumn
and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.*

*Praise the mutilated world
and the grey feather a thrush lost,
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes
and returns.*

Thank you, Holy Blossom, for carrying one another's burdens during this trying time. It's made all the difference and I admire you for it. Thank you for your creativity and your generosity, which I know will continue to see us through, until the gentle light returns.

AN ELEVATED SENSE OF BELONGING

Avra Rosen, President, Holy Blossom Board of Directors

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Holy Blossom Temple's first livestream service was a Kabbalat Shabbat service held on March 13, 2020. Within three days, we had stopped in-person services and gatherings, and shifted all our offerings to your homes. It is hard to believe that was only three months ago. So much has changed. But so much has not changed. Holy Blossom continues to be a leading, learning, and loving congregation, just as it was before March.

While the pandemic has limited our in-person gatherings, it has not limited our ability to offer our members and friends in the wider community an array of services, programs, lectures and teachings – all through online platforms – where we can continue to pray, learn and connect.

For me, everything takes longer as I continue to work remotely from home, whether it is for my law practice or my Holy Blossom Zoom meetings. I am truly inspired by our clergy, staff, lay leaders, and volunteers. They have seamlessly worked together as a community to connect with each member of Holy Blossom during this period of physical isolation, and to connect members with each other, staff, and clergy.

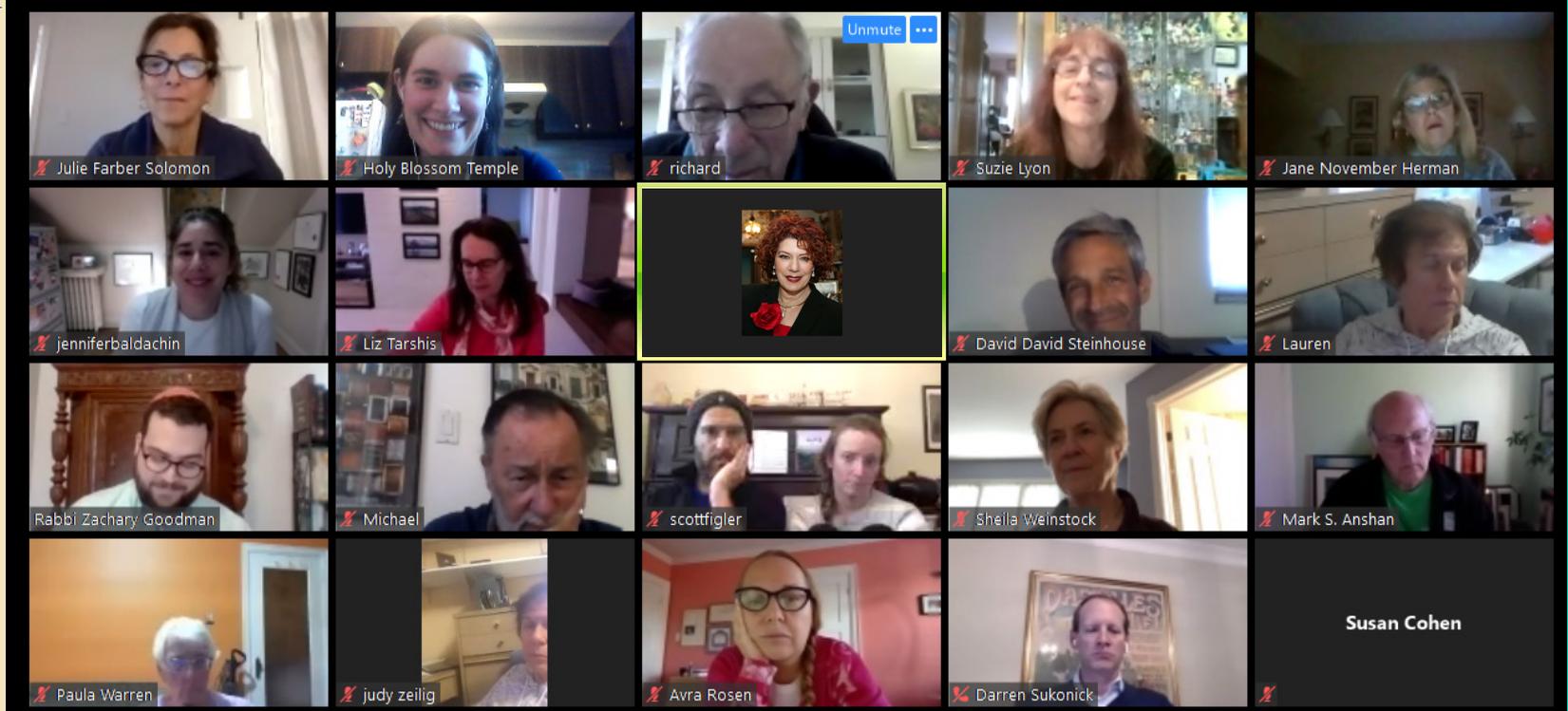
More importantly, they have elevated our sense of belonging. I have never felt more connected to Holy Blossom Temple and its members in the

last three months. Why? Because we all have a shared purpose to be there for each other.

The attendees at our daily, Shabbat and Yom Tov services have increased considerably. These numbers are tangible evidence of what I have been feeling, which is that there has been not only a renewal of spirit, but an increased desire to participate in congregation life.

I have never seen our leadership more energized. I am caught up with that sense of purpose as well, challenged by our limitations, but also thrilled by the opportunities to re-imagine and further invigorate our synagogue. I have never been prouder to be a member of Holy Blossom Temple. We welcome all of you to join us in volunteer and leadership positions as we continue to build and strengthen our community together.

I am frequently asked how we, at Holy Blossom Temple, are managing since we stopped in-person gatherings. My answer has never changed. Holy Blossom is and will always be there for our members 365 days a year. We are connecting with our members like never before, we are supporting each other spiritually and emotionally through a historic moment and our members have now welcomed us into their homes. Only our beautiful building is closed; our hearts and spirit are more open than ever.



CALLING ALL MEMBERS!

Abigail Carpenter-Winch, Director of Membership and Community Engagement

At the beginning of physical distancing, in mid-March, we began calling elderly members of the Temple. We were concerned about their wellbeing, and wanted to make sure that they were healthy, with access to food and medicine, and that they knew how to connect to the new virtual community. We reached out to everyone over 80 years old in the first week or two – and then decided to continue calling the entire congregation. As it became more clear how harmful COVID-19 is, we wanted to make sure that we checked in with everyone. We reached out to all members to let them know that someone was thinking of them, and to connect them with resources if they were struggling.

Call HaKavod, our name for this project, was our ambitious attempt to personally call every member of Holy Blossom. We made almost 2000 calls by 116 callers. This was a true community initiative.

Callers ranged in age from teens to seniors. Some had been members of Temple for many decades, and some just joined this year. Some made a handful of calls, and some made more than a hundred! This was a tremendous volunteer contributions.

This has been a deeply impactful project. We have received countless notes expressing how much this phone call meant. Here are just a sampling:

“The whole experience, whether making or receiving a call, puts such a human face on a synagogue which can actually be daunting because of its size.”

“Thank you for the friendly phone call today.”

“I appreciated the phone call I received. Thank you very much.”

“There was a message from someone from Temple to see if we were ok or if we needed anything.”

“It brought tears to my eyes.”

“HB is an incredible place. If I had a question or problem I would contact HB.”

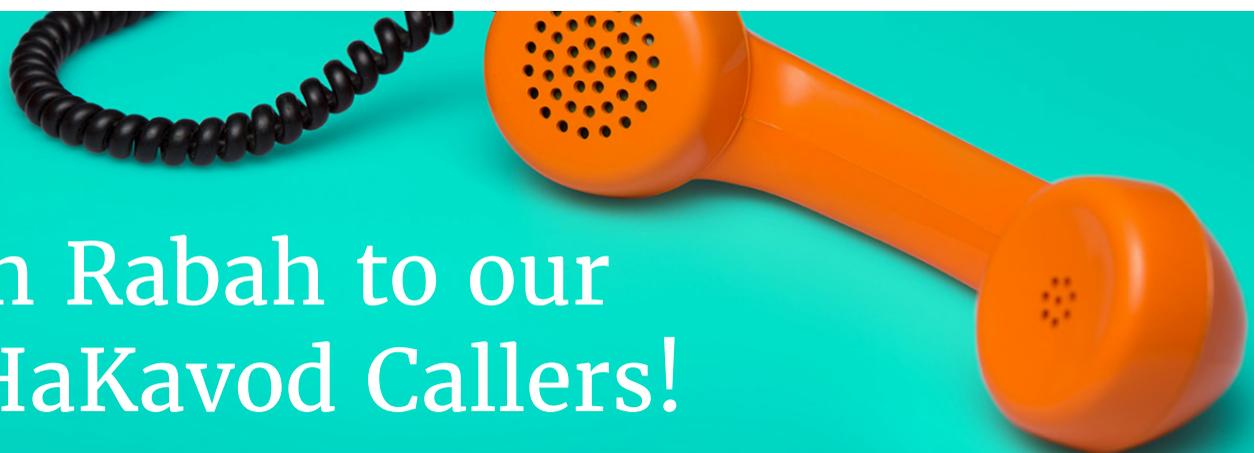
“Thank you for reaching out to members and looking for innovative ways to maintain community during this dark and uncertain time.”

“It is wonderful to know that the Temple is there for everyone especially in these difficult days.”

“I want to thank all of you for keeping us connected to Temple.”

Almost 2000 calls were made by 116 callers. This was a true community initiative!

Did you not receive a call? Please reach out to me at awinch@holyblossom.org and send me your up to date contact information. We’d love to call you!



Todah Rabah to our Call HaKavod Callers!

Aiden Coleman
Alan Lavine
Alex Henry
Alexa Coleman
Amy Kirsh
Arieh Waldman
Aubrey Freedman
Avishai Sol
Avra Rosen
Avram Musafija
Barry Borden
Bill Tepper
Bruce Kisluk
Camille Lisser
Chana Verbian
Corinne Pulver
Cynthia Good
David Steinhouse
Deb Bennett
Debbi Moses
Denise Gordon
Desiree Creed
Don Colt
Eden Gelgoot
Elana Paice Lidsky
Eli Sol
Ellen T. Cole
Ellen Karabanow
Ellen Ostofsky

Ellie Morch
Etienne Kaplan
Eva Ingber
Fern Daiter-Jay
Freda Ariella
Muscovitch
Gail Goodman
Gerry Prendergast
Gloria Pollock
Gloria Temkin
Hannah Adair
Happy Iscove
Harvey Schipper
Isabel Coleman
Jacque Friedland
Jane Herman
Jane Rendely
Jennifer Stulberg
Jennifer Baldachin
Jesse Sol
Jessica Baldachin
Jill Witkin
Joan Garson
Joan Heavenrich
Joel Kirsh
Joel Mickelson
Jonah Mickelson
Joy Wolfson
Judy Adler
Judy Borodin

Judy Winberg
Judy Zeilig
Julia Sommers
Julie Kirsh
Julie Markle
Julie Solomon
Julie Yakobson
Kathy Morrissey
Kelly Sennet
Kimberley Walters
Larry Babins
Leah Babins
Les Rothschild
Linda Neufeld
Lior Morgulis
Liz Tarshis
Lori Houzer
Louise Ford
Lynda Davis
Mark Goodman
Mark S. Anshan
Mark Schlossberg
Marla Powers
Martin Fingerhut
Martin Leibovici
Max Mickelson
Maxanne Ezer
Michael Ryval
Mike Morgulis

Mindy Goodman
Myrna Freedman
Nadine Charendoff
Nancy Bennett
Nancy Lerner
Pamela Hamovitch
Paula Warren
Phil Palter
Richard Lorie
Rick Howard
Rivanne Sandler
Sandra Merovic
Sandy Atlin
Scott Figler
Seymour Temkin
Sheila Katz
Sheila Smolkin
Sheila Weinstock
Shelley Birenbaum
Shelley Greene
Sherri Klein
Shoshana Iny
Shoshana Paice
Susan Cohen
Susan Linds
Suzie Lyon
Syrelle Bernstein
Toby Harrison
Uriel Priwes

BUILDING SACRED BELONGING: LAUNCHING OUR LGBT+ INCLUSION TASK FORCE

Rabbi Zachary Goodman, Assistant Rabbi

Holy Blossom Temple is guided by our values. As a community, we are always learning and growing together, as we aspire to fulfill our promise to be an inclusive spiritual home to all who seek Jewish community. The concept of “Belonging” is one of the six pillars of Holy Blossom’s “Statement of Identity,” which reads:

We aspire to be a sacred congregation in which all of our members, old and new, can connect through participation in Temple life...We come together to learn, pray, have fun, share in each other’s joys and sorrows, reach out to one another in support and compassion, and create lasting and meaningful memories. We strive to be a sacred community in which all congregants and those who may wish to join us feel they are known as individuals and families and that their participation and contributions of all kinds are welcomed, valued, and fulfilling.

We are strongly committed to creating a warm and welcoming home for all who seek an inclusive Jewish community. Holy Blossom Temple has long encouraged and supported LGBT+ members to learn, pray and celebrate life milestones here. In an effort to further strengthen our commitment to embracing an inclusive spirit, Holy Blossom has recently developed our LGBT+ Inclusion Task Force.

In the first week of March, prior to the introduction of physical distancing and shelter-in-place orders in Canada, I attended a day of professional development with Keshet, an organization that works for the full equality of all LGBT+ Jews and their families in Jewish life. It was heartwarming to see so many Jewish professionals coming together for a full day of study and discussion on how to create a more welcoming and accepting Jewish community. Holy Blossom was represented at the training by Debbie Spiegel (Director of Education), Lisa Isen Baumal (Director of Youth Engagement), and myself. We met with professionals from Hillel Ontario, Ontario Jewish Archives, MNjcc, UJA, Beth Tzedec, Moishe House and many more. I am so grateful to our Director of Membership and Community Engagement, Abigail Carpenter-Winch, who organized for Holy Blossom to be present at this powerful day of learning, even when she was thousands of miles away in Israel.

With the help of our partners at Keshet, the LGBT+ Inclusion Task Force was created. This group consists of staff, clergy, and lay leaders. We represent many of the major folds of Temple life; the Director of Education, the Director of Youth Engagement, the Director of Membership and Community Engagement and the clergy. We are joined by two members of the Board of Directors, Darren Sukonick (VP Membership) and Aubrey Freedman (VP Education).

Even as the pandemic changed the nature of our planning, this all-star committee continues to meet virtually and work to strengthen the inclusive spirit of Holy Blossom. We have begun working on an action plan to build a more LGBT+ affirming community at Holy Blossom, including identifying concrete steps toward LGBT+ inclusion that we as a community will prioritize over the year to come. We plan to both build on the success of our existing inclusion measures as well as to start new initiatives and programs.

If you would like more information about our commitment to inclusion, I invite you to be in touch with me at zgoodman@holyblossom.org or Abigail at awinch@holyblossom.org.



MITZVAH GORERET MITZVAH

Jill Witkin, VP Tikkun Olam & Rabbi Jordan Helfman, Associate Rabbi

Mitzvah Goreret Mitzvah – The reward for fulfilling a single world-sustaining commandment is that it opens the door to the next opportunity to do good in the world.

We are a community that is rich in good deeds – we take pride in our hands-on service in the Out of the Cold program, our engagement in countering Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, and our advocacy for poverty reduction through a more equitable allocation of resources.

This year, we are proud to introduce the Women’s Advocacy Group (WAG). WAG is made up of women from our congregation who are advocates for women’s rights professionally and in many volunteer capacities, and strive to improve the quality of life for women, children and families in the broader community. We are doing this by bringing pressing social justice issues to the forefront with the goal of educating our synagogue community. Recently, our group convened an all-star panel of professionals who work on the front-lines of domestic and child abuse, providing invaluable information on the unique impact of COVID-19 on women and children, including legal options, services and care available during this time of physical

distancing. To an individual in need or to a professional in the field, information is power and awareness leads to action and advocacy. The WAG group will continue with other educational events in the coming months.

Throughout this difficult time, our community has also continued to support the Syrian and other refugees that HBT members helped sponsor. Jacquie Friedland has been in constant touch with our families making sure they are looked after and cared for during these unprecedented circumstances.

The synagogue continues its work in sustainability, interfaith community, mental health awareness, and poverty alleviation.

For just a taste of some of the initiatives at Holy Blossom Temple and the active goodwill of our community, please look on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/holyblossomtemple/) for the Mitzvah Week video, which shows just how much our community cares.

Individually and collectively we have the power to contribute to *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, and our HBT community is driven to honour that responsibility.

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Reflections from Cantor Beny Maissner

Music has healing power. It can take people out of themselves into subconsciousness. "The idea of music having an impact in our lives goes back centuries. The beginnings of written-down music was the liturgy, and obviously that has a connection with the idea of a meditative state."

Music does not get in. Music is already in. Music simply uncovers what is there, makes you feel emotions that you did not necessarily know you had inside you, and runs around waking them all up. A rebirth of sorts. When music is needed, it's really there and it serves a purpose.

"Music can lift us out of depression or move us to tears – it is a remedy, music is not a luxury, but a necessity. Music is life itself." (Louis Armstrong)

"One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain." (Bob Marley)

These principles have been my guide and my life's story.

These last few months are incredibly special to me personally. Yet, it is difficult to focus only on this past year of musical events. Images throughout the years pop up into my consciousness. My entire being dives into endless exciting memories of grand and beautiful musical moments for our congregation and for myself. These memories travel thorough pathways of incredible musical highlights spreading over more than four decades.

I remember at my interview and audition in front of the music committee headed by John (Jack) Geller of blessed memory. When I was asked what is my vision of music at the Synagogue, my response was simple: "I want to teach Judaism through music."

Coming from a traditional culture where prayers were chanted and delivered with passion, as well as my own personal experiences, I set myself a goal to teach and hopefully create a worship culture of song that will embrace the entire congregation.

Over the many years, and with the support of all our Rabbinic leadership, we became, to my delight, a *singing congregation*. Song blossomed in all areas of community prayer. With Holy Blossom's long history of capable music directors, Ben Steinberg and ambitious Cantors Jack Badkin and Sheldon Merel, it was possible for me to continue and preserve the choral tradition.

This gift was reinforced week in and week out by including our professional choir with our blessed Temple Singers, which I inherited upon my arrival in the summer of 1979. I know that my Rabbinical colleagues and I are thrilled when we worship together as a singing community.

Among the many highlights of forty-one years as senior Cantor, was from the first season of 1979/80 promoting the unique *Musical Heritage Concert Series*. With the help of many loyal donors, we were able to bring top artists in the field of Jewish music. The themes for these concerts covered the widest gamut of Jewish content. Every style, from liturgical, classical, modern, jazz, klezmer, Yiddish and Israeli, we invited a dizzying array of talented artists.

To sum up my reflections for these incredible four decades, I can proudly recall this last season of musical events, which started with a big fanfare of celebration. The Musical Heritage committee and I decided to present this last concert season as my personal gift to the congregation in gratitude for the loving support over the many years.

I also produced a new CD as a personal gift to you my congregation, "A TWIST ON LITURGY." This recording includes favourite melodies in a jazz idiom.

This entire year was one big amazing musical highlight. The season had a beautiful beginning organized by the celebration committee. We gathered for a moving Selichot service before Rosh Hashanah. The music combined traditional as well as modern musical elements suitable for the haunting spiritual nature of penitential T'Filah.

The second major celebration concert was during Holocaust Education Week. Here, the committee engaged a unique program. Francesco Lotoro, a renowned Italian musicologist who has researched over thirty years of music written by perished and surviving composers during the Shoah. Vocal and instrumental music were presented, and I had the opportunity to sing in five languages! The program included the Triumphant March from the children's opera, *Brundibar*. Many of our own children and adults participated in this production.

My hopes and prayers for the future of our musical tradition and for our new HAZZAN David Rosen are only L'TIFERET FOR THE GLORY OF HOLY BLOSSOM!



“ESSENTIAL SERVICES” FOR THE SOUL

Alexis Singer, Holy Blossom member

When Holy Blossom went virtual, I knew I needed help. I had no idea about zoom, webcasts or the like. It was especially important to me to be able to attend Yiskor services on the 7th day of Pesach.

In the congregational survey, I indicated that I would need help in this regard. Enter the cadre of people available and willing to help me enter the world of virtual communication! Much to my surprise and pleasure, late one Friday afternoon, the multi-talented Paula Warren called to help me set Zoom up on my computer and gave me her phone number in case I needed additional help.

Despite Paula’s help, I couldn’t access services on the first day of Pesach. I then sent a plea to Deanna Levy, who spent quite a while trying to troubleshoot with me and realized that given my old computer equipment and lack of tech savvy, I would need help from someone with considerable expertise. Deanna connected me with Abigail Carpenter-Winch, who then connected me with Adam Sniderman; he was tasked with trying to help me sort out my problem so I would be able to attend Yiskor. Adam immediately diagnosed my issue and found a solution for it – all remotely, of course. Most importantly, he also gave

me permission to contact him on the morning of the service if I had trouble getting online. This seemingly small kindness of Paula and Adam – sharing the phone numbers - was enormously comforting to me.

On the 7th day of Pesach, it all worked like clockwork and I most gratefully attended the service. The virtual experience really meant so much more to me than I could ever have imagined. What has struck me is how we sometimes take things for granted because they are “always there for us” – in this case, the availability to worship as a community. I found that the ritual of saying Yiskor as a community and of hearing the beautiful music and prayers of the Pesach service was food for the soul, especially in these unusual times. I’m not sure I would have realized how much connecting through Yiskor means to me, had the possibility of not being able to attend loomed large.

The generosity of the team members – staff and congregants – demonstrated that physical distancing does not have to mean isolation. The Holy Blossom community has much to be proud of and grateful for. My story is just one example.



STRENGTHENING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AT TEMPLE

Darren Sukonick, VP Membership & Abigail Carpenter-Winch, Director of Membership and Community Engagement

Holy Blossom was invited to participate in the Union for Reform Judaism's DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) JewV'Nation program this year. This program matches up congregations, schools, and camps with fellows from around North America and equips Reform communities with the tools necessary to implement practices that centre on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Holy Blossom group consists of people from diverse backgrounds – ages, races, genders and sexuality, length of membership at Temple, leadership roles at Temple, class backgrounds, Jewish backgrounds and previous engagement, and disabilities. We meet with Rachel Hall, URJ Program Manager, and Denise Dautoff, a JewV'Nation fellow, several times a month, and gather monthly with the other organizations that are participating the program.

As a group, we have been learning together on racism and other oppressions in general and specifically within the Jewish community. We have begun assessing various areas of inclusion at Holy Blossom; seeing where we are excelling and where there is room to improve. The work hasn't been easy, and we are pushing ourselves. We are learning and understanding how our personal and our community's, implicit biases perpetuate structures that are unwelcoming. We aspire to increase the overall accessibility of Temple life and to ensure that we are creating a blossoming *Kehilah Kedoshah*, a holy community, that is welcoming to all who wish to call Holy Blossom home.

CELEBRATING A BAT MITZVAH DURING A PANDEMIC

Ariel Dalfen, Holy Blossom member & proud mom

In early March, when someone brought up the idea that we may not be able to hold our simchas in person at Holy Blossom due to COVID-19, all of us gathered for the “May Bat Mitzvah” cohort meeting laughed dismissively. At that time, the devastation and global shutdowns that were to follow were inconceivable. I don’t think anyone sitting around that table could have predicted how our world would evolve and our lives be transformed over the next few months.

But, as we all know now, life as it was soon came to a grinding halt. At first, our family was in denial about how long our lives would need to be different and sheltered-at-home. We figured life would be back to normal by early May and we expected that Liv’s Bat Mitzvah would occur as planned. But it quickly became clear that this was not to be and that we would need to figure out how to hold our daughter Liv’s bat mitzvah during a global pandemic. There were some tears and lots of stress about how to proceed. We opted not to cancel or re-schedule Liv’s bat mitzvah, since she had spent many months working hard to learn her portion and to prepare for this particular Shabbat. Plus, her amazing teacher Dalia Alalouf and Cantor Maissner and Cantorial Soloist Rivers continued to support and guide her progress with regular FaceTime meetings.

We tuned in to the livestream Shabbat morning services each Saturday to watch and wonder at what the new reality looked like and how the services would unfold. As the pandemic spread and our world went into a lock down, and as we saw Holy Blossom transition to virtual services, we were told that we would have to hold Liv’s ceremony at our own home. It was hard not to worry that it may feel flat and lonely in contrast to the warmth and connected feelings we experienced when our older daughter, Lela, became a bat mitzvah a few years ago. We worried about how we could make Liv’s bat mitzvah feel special and connected, despite being alone in our home, and distant from our loved ones and the Holy Blossom community.

As the date approached, the amazing staff at Holy Blossom Temple began to mobilize and to support us in making Liv’s Bat Mitzvah happen in our own home. Rabbi Goodman delivered the Torah to our home on Wednesday, Rabbi Helfman walked us through the service for rehearsal #1 on Thursday, and Rabbi Splansky met with us for moral support and conversation on Friday, before Rabbi Helfman guided us through

rehearsal #2 later that day, with grandparents in different locations around Ontario brought in via Zoom to practice their aliyot. We joined the Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat service and lit the candles with the community.

On Shabbat morning, we felt a lot of excitement. Our family of four got dressed up and huddled around our table with the Torah with the Zoom link ready to go. Throughout the service, we felt fully engaged and part of something larger than ourselves. I was grinning with pride, as Liv delivered her thoughtful D’var Torah, and then beautifully and calmly chanted her Torah portion and her haftorah right by our side. A bit to our surprise and much to our delight, the experience felt very real, very important, and extremely moving, despite its virtual nature. Although under distinctly modern and unique circumstances, Liv was still able to become a bat mitzvah and carry on our Jewish traditions.

Like many of our friends and family, we felt that having a “front row seat” and being up close on the screen with the clergy contributed to a heightened sense of intimacy during the service that isn’t always experienced with the physical distances in the sanctuary. And after the joyous service, emails, texts, and calls poured in from our friends and family. The instant feedback, the screen shots, the loving emojis and play by play comments that were shared with us, helped us to feel as if we were all together with our people, celebrating Liv becoming a bat mitzvah. We were also surprised to learn how many people tuned in from across Canada and around the world. Over the next few days, as “mazel tovs” streamed in, our family felt part of a large and connected community that was cheering Liv on and embracing a new way of celebrating an ancient Jewish tradition.

We were grateful to be able to celebrate Liv becoming a bat mitzvah during the COVID pandemic. Planning and celebrating joyously distracted us and our friends and family from the daily stresses and anxiety of life during these times and gave us something to be joyful about. We felt that the whole experience brought out the best human qualities that we are seeing during these COVID times; creativity, flexibility, and a strong, united sense of all being in this together. A virtual bat mitzvah celebration went from being utterly inconceivable to being a memorable and remarkably beautiful simcha, where we found meaning and deep joy.

HBT Virtual by the numbers

Our Synagogue never closed, it just opened in every home!



**website statistics from March 13-May 31, 2020*

What these numbers mean... Holy Blossom Temple's website served as the hub for connecting our members as the pandemic pushed us online for work, worship, and socializing. From returning and new users, the numbers clearly show our members, wider community, *and beyond* found a plethora of opportunities to engage online. From the number of sessions (times a user actively engaged with our website), and over 18,000 livestream page views, it is clear that Holy Blossom created an online sanctuary for our community.



1844

Member Households

- 156** Terumah Households
- 991** Sustaining rate members households
- 622** Households receive community support
- 8** Introduction Jewish Living households
- 17** Newlywed households
- 34** Staff have complimentary membership
- 16** Out of Town households
- 284** YAD (Young Adult Division) designations

TOO MANY TO COUNT!

Virtually engaged members and friends of Holy Blossom



48

Livestreamed Shabbat, Havdalah & Yom Tov services

700+

Guests at our Virtual Seder including Mayor Tory!



26

Incredible speakers, artists, and musicians



112

Diverse Adult Education Programs



12

Livestreamed B'nei Mitzvah



24

Little Blossoms sessions welcoming in Shabbat



197

ECC virtual learning sessions



25

Online youth engagement activities



455

Active participants and viewers at YEC services



Cindy Zimmer, Manager of Member and Donor Services

For the Membership Department, this time of year is a time to look back at the year that was, and forward to the year to come. And as I was planning for our upcoming membership year, I realized that I have been working at Holy Blossom for almost 10 years (this November!) in different roles. While each role has allowed me to get to know our congregation in different ways, that has been especially true during my time in the Membership Department. As my duties cover a wide spectrum, I get to talk to, and hopefully help, members of our community with questions about membership, yahrzeits, memorial plaques, cemeteries, and more.

In these challenging times of social and physical distancing, it is rewarding to still be able to continue to communicate and help our members, if in slightly different ways. Email, Zoom and telephone calls have taken precedence and our ability to help our congregation virtually is heartening. That we are able to continue to bring a meaningful spiritual connection to our members and our community at this time is truly wonderful and I look forward to a time (hopefully not too far in the future) when we can come together again in person.

While much of my work in the membership department is behind the scenes (updating the database, preparing membership statements, doing research, etc.), I truly enjoy assisting our members with questions about yahrzeits, helping them find or purchase memorial plaques for their loved ones, and answering questions about purchasing cemetery plots. Whether virtually or in person, it is the connections with our members and community that make working at Holy Blossom worthwhile.

Karen Kollins & Jill Kamin, Co-Chairs, HBTogether

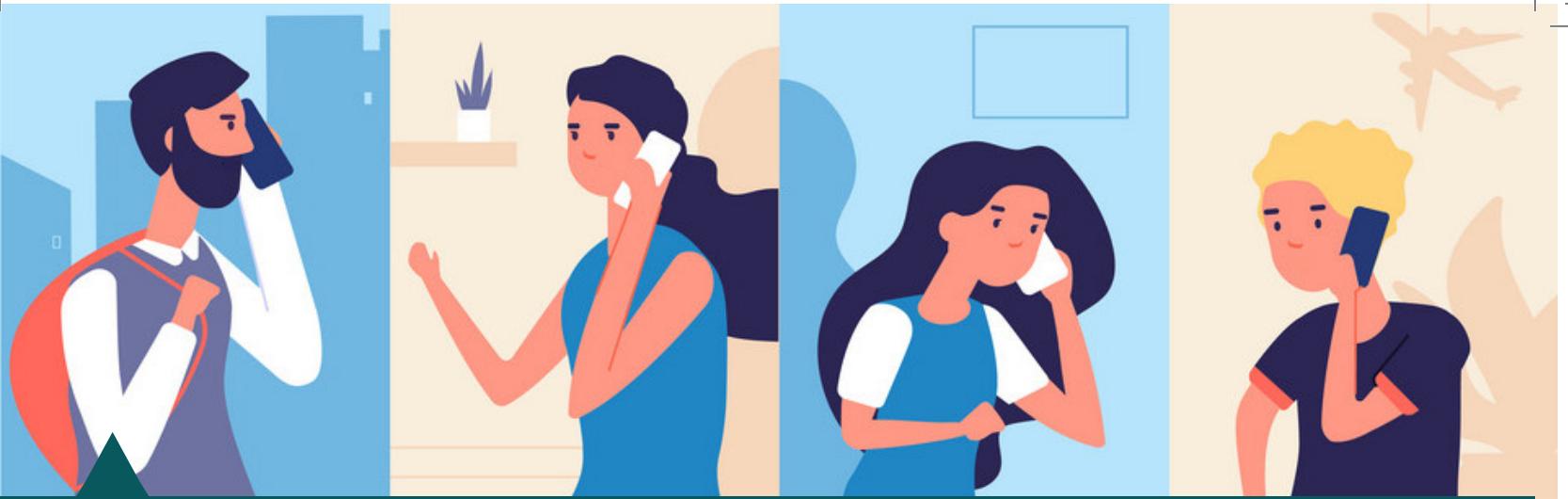
HBTogether brings together and supports small groups of Holy Blossom members sharing a similar interest, at a similar life-stage or living in a common neighbourhood or a combination of these.

HBTogether leaders recently gathered via Zoom to connect with each other, speak of our successes and discuss some of our challenges. Groups such as Cyclopaths and Israeli Film have been meeting for many years. Some of our newest small groups are the Ukulele Group, Young Moms, West End Families, Israeli Folk Dancers, and Arts and Culture Aficionados. It was inspiring to connect and hear about how other groups are navigating connecting virtually. We look forward to continuing to share our stories and to bring our groups together again.

We also launched our first “virtual” small group, under the leadership of Cantor Marty Steinhouse. In the short time that this group has been meeting, we have had guests from Singapore, New York and South Africa to share their stories with us. (Check the HBT website for upcoming weekly meetings.) We are also looking forward to the launching of a virtual book club, and to many more HBTogether groups!

HBTogether wants to continue to make connections in our community through small groups. Please be in touch and let us know what your interests for a small group might be or if you’d like to become involved as a leader!

To get involved with HBTogether, please contact Abigail Carpenter-Winch at awinch@holyblossom.org.



Julie Solomon, VP Kehila Kedosha

Many of us face hardships such as the loss of loved ones, mental and physical illness, financial loss, parenting challenges, divorce, loss of employment and other significant events. More often than we know, members of the Jewish community turn to their synagogues for solace and support from their rabbis, cantors, and professional staff.

In an effort to address these issues and the added stresses that COVID-19 has placed upon those in our community, we set out to offer a training program for our leaders and staff to arm them with more tools to recognize when someone is in crisis and how best to manage the situation.

With support of the Department of *Kehila Kedoshah* and the Luke Sklar Mental Health Initiative, we launched the interactive workshop that was facilitated by training professionals from the Gerstein Centre. The workshop centred around how to recognize warning signs of someone experiencing a crisis and how to use verbal and non-verbal techniques to listen to, support and refer the person to helpful services and resources.

The Crisis Intervention Workshop was an opportunity to expand our knowledge and understanding of mental health in our community. Judaism teaches the importance of 'healing of the soul' as well as the body. This workshop helped us build on our ability to support the well-being of our congregants and our community..



GRATITUDE FOR BELONGING TO THE HBT COMMUNITY



Amanda Bertoia & family

Our family have been members of Holy Blossom for four generations. From baby namings through bat mitzvahs, we have felt at home and a part of the community at Holy Blossom. Through the years, my daughters have established their Jewish identities as a part of a modern, inclusive and socially conscious community at Holy Blossom Temple. My eldest daughter Adelaide has found a great group of like-minded kids in HABSTY and has enjoyed two trips to Washington with HBT through the L'Taken program, where she was taught lobbying strategies and the intricacies of politics. Both kids love volunteering with mitzvah bakers to help out Seniors and the homeless community through the Out of the Cold program. As a parent, it makes me feel proud and confident that my children are being taught empathy and caring for others as well as lifelong skills for being productive, engaged members of the Jewish community and Toronto on the whole.



Denes Rothschild

Holy Blossom, including the YEC, was so quick to jump into providing amazing virtual programming for kids to stay connected with the community!

With so many routines disrupted during this time, the Temple has provided consistent, engaging, fun and educational programming for kids of all ages.

Simone and Ben have stayed connected with their YEC classes, enjoyed the stylings of the great David Gershon regularly, and had all sorts of fun and learning opportunities, including yummy Israeli baking, all from home!



How do we welcome Cantor Rosen? You are the key!

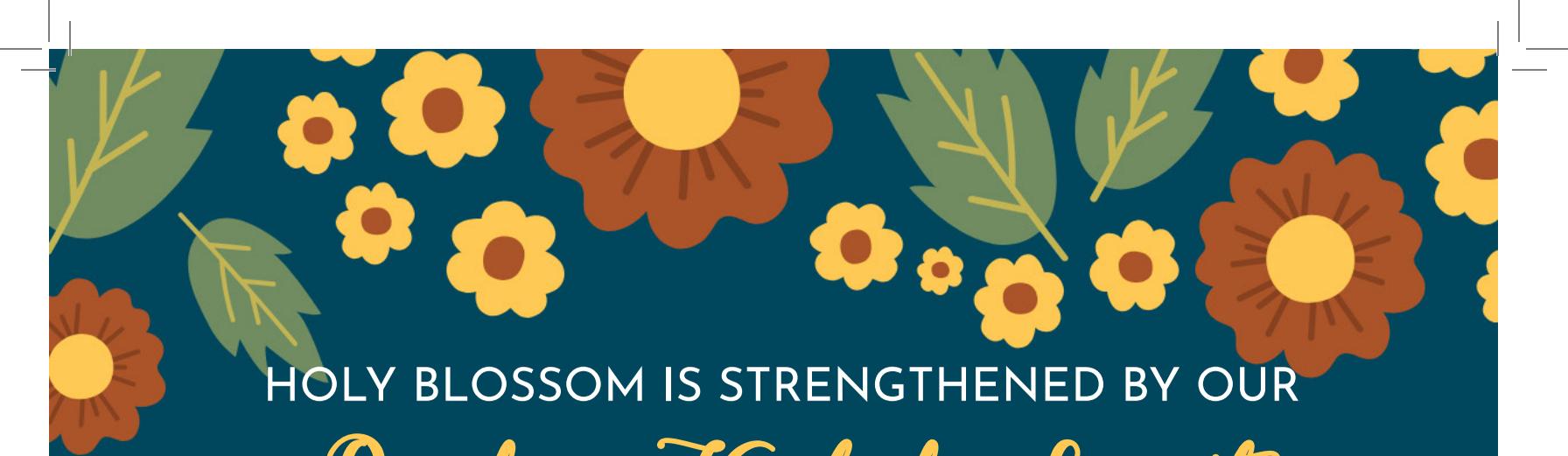
Now is the time! In happy anticipation of welcoming Cantor David Rosen to his new role as of July 1, 2020, let's give him and his family a big, congregation-wide *bruchim haba'im* - in the form of a short multimedia video.

We would love to receive video clips (ideally no more than 7 seconds long, using your phone camera in landscape orientation), photos, and audio clips sharing a few words of welcome. What should you say? Here are some suggestions:

- You can share your favourite piece of Holy Blossom Temple that you can't wait for the Rosen family to experience.
- You can simply say, "We can't wait to meet you" (in any language you speak at home).
- You can describe something you're looking forward to learning from our new Senior Cantor.
- You can involve your family to prepare some arts and crafts like welcome signs, and send in some photos. This is a great opportunity to get creative.
- Please submit your materials to hbcantorwelcome@gmail.com by July 10, 2020. Please also specify whether we may list your names in the compilation. If you would like to get involved in editing the video or if you have other skills you'd like to contribute, please reach out at the email address above.

Stay tuned for more on Cantor Rosen's official welcome, as well as specific invitations to more opportunities to connect directly with him once he arrives.

From Rachel Malach, Jeff Denaburg, and the Cantor's Search and Welcome Committee



HOLY BLOSSOM IS STRENGTHENED BY OUR

Pirchei Kodesh Society

72 years of membership

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Goodman
Geraldine Karlan
Myra Krangle
Florence Pape
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Benjamin Applebaum
Jocelyne Salem
Brianna Caryl Valihora
Kimberley & Craig Walters

WELCOME TO OUR CONGREGATIONAL FAMILY

We are delighted to welcome the following new members to Holy Blossom Temple:

Alissa and Bobby Goodman

Shoshana Jamieson and children
Andrew and Ryan

Nancy Lerner and Gary Grundman

Talia Rotman

Ali and Jamie Weksberg and Taylor

Carole Winberg

Amir Yousef-Zadeh

February 2020 - May 2020

Mazel Tov to...

BIRTHS

Jesse Moses and Jessica Villemaire on the birth of a daughter, Theodora 'Teddi' Moses. Proud grandparents are Debbi Charendoff Moses and Bobby Moses and Jennifer and Mark Villemaire.

Rebecca Penturn and Steven Weerdenburg on the birth of their son, Noah. Proud grandparents are James Penturn and Kathleen Crook and Jerry and Mary Weerdenburg. Late great grandparents are Norton and Edith Penturn.

Stephanie Harris and Daniel Winberg on the birth of their daughter, Mia. Sister to Cameron. Proud grandparents are Jack and Judy Winberg and Gary and Diane Harris. Proud grandmother is Adele Rolin.

David and Katy Albert on the birth of their daughter, Sally (Long Tall Sally). Sister to Lily (Lilyicious). Proud grandparents are Gary and Rosemary Tile and Michael and Pam Albert. Proud great grandparents are Marvin and Esther Tile and Madie and Art Weingarden.

Sarah Chisholm and Drew Bartram on the birth of their son Cosmo Maxwell. Brother to Nia and Wrennie. Proud grandparents are Debra Bennett, and Michele Berlyne and Rick Chisholm. Proud great-grandparents are Shanti Blum, Edith Chisholm, and Barbara Bennett.

Anna Gurevich and Lior Sagi on the birth of their son Avshalom Gur Sagi. Proud grandparents are Rivkale Sagi and Avi Buchvalter Z"l / Alla Avtsin and Semyon Gurevich Z"l.

Angie and Adam Shiffman on the birth of Jared Theodore Shiffman. Sibling to Isabelle Shiffman. Proud grandparents are Richard and Joanne Cummings, Melanie and Michael Savoie and Larry and Judy Shiffman. Proud great grandparents are David Shiffman and Elayne Gold.

WEDDINGS & ENGAGEMENTS

Daniel Rosen & Anna Mackenzie on their engagement. Proud parents are Susan Jackson and Larry Rosen and Ana Lucia Mackenzie and Don Mackenzie. Proud great grandparents are Harry and Evelyn Rosen and Margaret Mackenzie.

Mazel Tov!

B'NEI MITZVAH



Liv Schneiderman
Daughter of Ariel Dalfen & Jed Schneiderman
Saturday, May 2, 2020



Leah Baker
Daughter of Debra & Jeff Baker
Saturday, May 9, 2020



Julia Hurowitz
Daughter of Diane Osak & Steven Hurowitz
Saturday, May 23, 2020



Jaiden Goodman
Daughter of Lauren & Mark Goodman
Saturday, June 6, 2020



Benjamin Grunberg
Son of Melissa Goldband & Lee Grunberg
Saturday, June 6, 2020



Lucas Warwick
Son of Lisi Teshler & Rob Warwick
Saturday, June 20, 2020

Hannah Adair
Daughter of Jennifer Stulberg & John Adair
Thursday, May 28, 2020

Aaron Maitland-Carter
Son of Lauren & Jedid Maitland-Carter
Saturday, June 27, 2020

B'nei Mitzvah Livestreams

Until the day we can all gather together to celebrate our incredible B'nei Mitzvah youth being called to the Torah, Holy Blossom will Livestream these special milestones so that family, friends, and the Holy Blossom Community can celebrate together!

Like or follow Holy Blossom Temple on Facebook, or visit our website to watch the Livestream Services.

IN MEMORIAM

Holy Blossom Congregants who have died this year

Jean Applebaum	Malca Marin
Ethel Bain	Leonard Melamed
Tillie Bardikoff	Cecile Metrick
Bertram Barruch	Sylvia Miller
Caryl Barruch	William Moull
Edwin Bass	Arthur Muscovitch
Alex Bercovici	Douglas Nyquist
Marilyn Birenbaum	Theodore Rachlin
David Caplan	Edward Richardson
Henrietta Chesnie	Peter Rockman
Carol Freedman	Thelma Rose
Gerald Freedman	Hank Rosen
Reva Gerstein	Edward Samuel
Veronica Glaser	Lawrence Sax
Godfrey Goodman	Vivian Shapiro
Melvyn Goodman	Lillian Sherman
Allan Gotlieb	Alex Siegel
Shirley Gula	Rachel Silver
Richard Kardish	Julius Silver
Henry Kay	Ruthe Simonsky
Ethel Kellen	Doris Sommer-Rotenberg
Shirley Kofman	Gloria Sossin
Sloane Leon	Mel Spiegel
Ruth Levine	Joanne Steinberg
Sandra Levitt	Ryan Stossel-Stairs
Sylvia Levy	Sylvia Stransman
Henry Liss	
Mildred Margulies	

May 20, 2019 to May 19, 2020

זכרונם לברכה

May their memory be a blessing

A L'Chaim for Cantor Maissner

Cantor's Circle Donors

Holy Blossom Temple gratefully acknowledges the generous support of Cantor's Circle donors to The Cantor Benjamin Maissner Musical Legacy Fund

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Carole and Bernard Zucker

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Susan and George Cohon
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Linda Frum and Howard Sokolowski

CHORUS

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Diana and Marvin Goodman
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**Pledges received as of Friday, May 29, 2020*

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Martin Teshar, In Memory:
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Ludwigsen

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Shelley Mintz

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Piche for the Winnipeg Piche family

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My Family, Yahrzeit: Paula Kirsh

Anne Weinstein, In Memory: Fran
& Bernie Goldman

Bonnie Goldman Masters, In
Memory: Fran & Bernie Goldman

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& Gary Shiffman

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WE THANK OUR GENEROUS DONORS

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The Promise with Keep for The High Holy Days, 5781

The story goes a young rabbi was dutifully preparing for the Days of Awe. He was immersed in practicing every word, every note, every page cue, when his teacher entered the room and asked what he was doing. "It's less than a week to Rosh HaShanah and I still have to prepare so many more pages of the *machzor* (High Holy Day prayerbook)!" The older and wiser rabbi taught: "You'll be better prepared for the Days of Awe if you'd only study your *neshamah* (soul) as carefully as you study those pages."

Some congregants who care deeply about Holy Blossom have asked about our plans for the High Holy Days. While Rosh HaShanah is still four months away, we want to reassure you that our Clergy Team, including our incoming Senior Cantor David Rosen, has diligently been preparing for two likely scenarios as well as for two less likely scenarios. We do not have a crystal ball. It would be premature and misleading to announce a plan now when so much can change between now and September.

What we can tell you:

- The **health and safety** of our congregants continues to be our priority. No matter how much we long to be together again, we will only convene in ways that are in keeping with the best practices and protocols established by public health and government authorities.
- **Online alternatives** will be available for our congregants at home. We have been met with such gratitude for our live-streamed services and educational offerings over the past eight weeks, we are convinced they will remain as a lasting component of what we provide in the future, even after it is safe to congregate again. The screen is certainly not as satisfying as gathering side by side in sacred community; it is not as joyful as raising our voices together in song; it is not as uplifting as quiet contemplation in one of our beautiful sanctuaries, but it is a powerful tool for extending our reach, for connecting with our tradition, and for uniting with one another when we cannot be together in person. We are investing in hardware and staff in order to ensure vibrant on-line alternatives.
- When we began planning in earnest three weeks ago, many **creative solutions and many imaginative ideas** began to emerge. As in so many other areas of life now, the High Holy Days will be a balance between the best of what we've always known and treasured combined with new experiments and engaging innovations. Challenges are becoming opportunities.
- We will be in **regular contact** with you over the coming months as our plans take shape and our confidence grows in what we believe life will look like in September. Until then, please know that our Rabbis and Cantors, together with our Worship Committee and the President's COVID-19 Cabinet are working thoughtfully and thoroughly to develop the finest plan to make these High Holy Days meaningful and memorable for us all.

Like the young rabbi, preparing to lead High Holy Day Services for the first time, we find ourselves in uncharted waters, but we are also like the mentoring rabbi who has the accumulation of wisdom and life experiences to draw upon. We are confident you will be delighted by the quality and quantity of the offerings we can provide throughout the coming High Holy Day season.

Rabbi Yael Splansky

Senior Rabbi

Avra Rosen

Temple President

Ron Polster

Executive Director

