

President's Speech

Greetings. L'Shana Tovah. It is with great joy that I wish you all a happy New Year.

And it is with great sadness that I cannot greet each of you in person; or that we cannot parade our Torah around our Sanctuary all together, as one; or that we cannot greet and hug our friends, both new and old.

These are trying times. There is no denying this. THESE ARE TRYING TIMES. The COVID pandemic has produced uncertainty—uncertainty about our financial futures and, as the pandemic extends with no end in sight, it produces uncertainty about the Future – with a capital “F”. It has introduced a near universal sense of isolation and loneliness. I am sure that for so many of us, the COVID pandemic has turned our view and understanding of the world head-over-heels.

As you all know, issues of racial inequality touch me personally and deeply. One thing the pandemic has underscored is the systemic racial inequality faced by our society. When I look at our country today, I see black men and women being killed by police officers sworn to protect them. I see mass demonstrations in several major cities where citizen armies on both sides of issues fight each other in the street. I see a movement to defund police, political infighting, and ever increasing social and economic segregation. And all this – ALL OF THIS – has left me in a state of constant anxiety and agitation. And it makes me fearful for the future of my children.

And I am sure so many of you have your own reasons for feeling this same way.

I KNOW THAT FOR ME AND PROBABLY FOR SO MANY OF US, IT WOULD BE SO EASY FOR THIS TIME OF PANDEMIC TO BECOME A TIME TO DESPAIR. And it would be so easy to sink into that ... abyss; to forego hope. So I want to remind you of a couple of things.

First, as Emily Dickinson stated so simply, **“‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers.”**

“Hope” [- *Tikvah* -] is the thing with feathers.
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

“Hope” – *Tikvah* - is the thing with feathers. Let us never forget this sentiment or stray too far away from it particularly during these Days of Awe.

Second, during the pandemic, Temple Sinai's – our community's – efforts to meet the challenges thrown at us during this time have been truly remarkable. We continue to have Shabbat services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. We continue to have Torah Study. We continue to incorporate speakers and musicians in our prayer and programming. We have increased our level of sponsorship of Jewish-themed events in our area. We have increased our level of collaboration with other Jewish institutions. Sisterhood continues to gather outside on a weekly basis. Brotherhood continues with its efforts. Our Chaverim Committee continues to reach out to members in meaningful and significant ways. And our Social Action Committee continues its efforts to impact and improve our world. We have established multiple book clubs which meet regularly to educate, to learn, to discuss and, yes, to entertain.

In addition, I have to say, during this time of pandemic, we continue to celebrate life cycle events such as baby namings, bat mitzvahs and weddings. We continue to mourn and honor family members and close friends who are no longer with us. We continue to add new members and grow. We continue to maintain our building. Our Board and committees continue to meet. Religious school continues to transform itself and will start classes next Thursday. **We are up and operating.**

So here at Temple Sinai, life carries on. Importantly, it carries on in a way that fully meets the challenges presented to us in this time of pandemic. While so much of what we have accomplished simply meets the new standard we set for ourselves, there is no denying the fact that we have—in a very real way—**reinvented** ourselves. We must applaud the efforts of Rabbi, Judy, Stacie, Mark and so many others who have worked so hard during this time of pandemic to reinvent and re-new Temple Sinai.

Third—and my final reminder to you—is this. As members of Temple Sinai, we implicitly share a covenant. That covenant is to look after each other and take care of each other. The truth is that we can come to services without being a member. We can ZOOM into an activity sponsored by Temple Sinai without being a member. But by being a member, we have taken that extra step and committed to being responsible for the health and wellbeing of our Temple Sinai Community. It means that we take responsibility for each other in times of celebration and in times of hardship.

During this time of COVID, our Temple Sinai community has been tested. And I am happy to report that we have passed that test with flying colors. It is remarkable how well our members have measured up to and met our covenant. Thank you to everyone for your hard work, your encouragement, and your engagement.

So as we enter this new year of 5781, I encourage you to continue to renew your Covenant with Temple Sinai. And here is how you can do that:

If you are feeling spiritually or emotionally adrift, engage in worship or Torah study with Temple Sinai.

If you are feeling isolated or alone, engage with programming offered by Temple Sinai.

If you feel like you want to do something to help our community, engage with any of the committees or Board working for Temple Sinai.

If you want to learn more about Judaism, Israel, how the Reform Movement addresses issues of social justice, engage with Temple Sinai.

And if you seek companionship, friendship, or community, engage with Temple Sinai.

So to everyone, I wish each of you a happy new year. Joy and success for 5781.

L'Shana Tovah.

“Hope” is the thing with feathers

BY EMILY DICKINSON

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.