

FROM THE CANTOR

Dear Friends,

I hope you all experienced a joyous Passover, buoyed by meaningful connection—whether it was in person or virtual.

I am thrilled to report on many wonderful developments in our synagogue life over the past couple of months. And I am excited about the increasing opportunities for engagement during the months of May and June.

Here are a few highlights from the past couple of months:

- HIAS Refugee Shabbat Service on March 4 (which also coincided with our instrumental Musical Shabbat) featured a moving opening address by Amila Merdzanovic from USCRI-Vermont, highlighting the ongoing needs of the current Afghan refugees here in Vermont, as well as the longstanding partnership between our synagogue and the Refugee Resettlement Program. Later in the service, Michael Schaal delivered poignant words and a prayer for the plight of the Ukrainian refugees. We were moved by the “Prayer for Ukraine” performed beautifully by Lila Morris and her Oberlin quartet. As the crisis in Ukraine was emerging, all of these service elements helped to hold our community through the range of emotions that we were (and still are) experiencing.
- It was wonderful to have such a great level of engagement from our OZ Hebrew School and Full Circle Preschool families at our Family Shabbat morning service on March 26. Many of you commented to me how thrilled you were to see the children enthusiastically participating in the Torah procession and surrounding the Torah as it was chanted. It was also wonderful to see the culmination of the Hebrew School students’ learning about the *Modeh Ani* prayer for gratitude, as each class presented their own interpretation using visual art, drama, movement and music (thanks to Naomi and the Hebrew School teachers)!

During May and June, I am looking forward to a variety of opportunities for community engagement. Here is a sampling of a few upcoming events that I’m really excited about:

- Musical Shabbat—Friday, May 6 & June 3 @ 6:00 pm. Leave the week behind and join together in joyful prayer, accompanied by our instrumental prayer ensemble.
- Hallelu Service—Saturday, May 7 & June 18 @ 10:00 am: A shorter alternative to the Traditional Shabbat morning service that will provide many gateways into worship, using song, poetry and discussion.
- Young Professionals Group Shmooze in the Yurt: Friday, May 13 @ 7:00 pm: A great opportunity for OZ community members (and friends) who are in their 20s/30s to connect with one another!

- “Songs of Hope and Healing” - A Havdalah & Musical Coffee House, Saturday, May 14 @ 8:00 pm: Our own talented OZ musicians will lead us in a night of beautiful story-telling through music.
- OZ Singing Community, Sunday May 29 @ 4:30 pm in the Yurt: We are thrilled to come back together to create harmonies while singing participatory tunes and spiritual *niggunim* (wordless melodies).

For more information on all of these (and many other) exciting events please consult the OZ calendar.

As we move through these next few months, I hope that each of our community programs will spark new connections as well as nurture existing ones. I can’t wait to see all of you soon!

L’shalom,
Cantor Steve
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