

## **SOCIAL ACTION/G'MACH**

For nearly 20 years I have been advocating for embedding within the OZ identity and culture that social justice is the responsibility of members of the OZ community, and not just for mandate for our clergy and staff.

Over time as a congregation we have accomplished many things that reflect our commitment to social action and social justice. They are not the same things. Social justice is aspirational. Our Shalom Shuk is a reflection of our values at Ohavi Zedek, Lovers of Justice. The efforts of the G'maCH Committee to serve our members with individual medical, pastoral and social needs is an example of those values. The Social Action Committee aims to affect individuals by addressing systems problems within the synagogue and outside of our Jewish community. By addressing and impacting those systems we will positively affect the well-being of individuals.

When we address the needs of BIPOC and AAPI (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and (Americans and Pacific Islanders) we are also addressing and impacting similar forces to those that affect us as Jews. We Jews have always been and still are "the other" in American Society and in many other places in the world. Addressing the needs of "the other" is where we belong. It is true in America, where we are more assimilated than we have ever been anywhere else, and it is true around the world.

Years ago, I co-founded an African-American/ Jewish Dialogue. Several of us from OZ met with some African-American people in the lounge at OZ once a month for about five years. One of the things that struck me when I spoke of the prejudice that we Jews encounter was the reply that we could pass because most of us had white skin. Our African-American friends could not. People did not necessarily know that we were Jews because the majority of us in this country are white. Members of the AAPI community cannot pass. This is also true of BIPOC Jews within our congregation and elsewhere.

If you have not already received the survey prepared by the Anti-Racism Work Group by the time you are reading this, you soon will. I urge you to fill it out. Our intention is to solicit information that will address the needs of all of us, especially those who are BIPOC or members of BIPOC families within OZ. It will help us to be more inclusive and ultimately take action in support of BIPOC people in their own community. It is where we belong.

In addition to the work of the Anti-Racism group, we have begun an effort to address issues of hunger. Several of us representing many demographics at OZ are beginning to take on this problem and finding meaningful, strategic ways of addressing hunger. I do not wish to be part of symbolic gestures so that we can have "bragging rights" that we are making a contribution. I want everything that we do at OZ regarding social action, big or small, to have real impact. If you are interested in participating in efforts to address hunger, please contact me.

I hope that in the coming months we will begin an initiative to address environmental issues. I will let you know. Take very good care.

~ Michael Schaal  
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## G'MACH

The project to bake and deliver Purim baskets was a big success! Kudos to our bakers, Jeff Potash and Neil Kanarick, and to all the volunteer drivers that helped enrich the day for the recipients!

We also want to congratulate all the volunteers who participated in three distinct calling campaigns that informed senior members ages 75 and over, 70-74, and 65-69 when each age grouping was eligible to get their first COVID-19 vaccine. It was a wonderful exercise in community building and everyone called appreciated the outreach!

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