

FROM THE CANTOR

As we endeavor to come back together in person in the coming weeks and months, let us take stock on what we have been able to learn and accomplish over these past 13 months, specifically in the areas of music and prayer. While we have undoubtedly missed the joys of joining our voices in melody (and harmony) and to be moved by live instrumental music, we have been able to adapt to the medium of remote musical offerings.

Here are some of the ways we have been able to adapt (and benefit) from the new possibilities offered during the past year:

- We have been blessed to pray and sing with special musical guests who have joined “from afar” for virtual services and concerts, including Yoel Sykes, Nefesh Mountain, Dan Nichols, Neshama Carlebach and Craig Taubman.
- Over 50 participants (OZ members, friends and family) came together on Tuesday nights in the winter to learn about the history of the Broadway musical, with special guest performances by Adam Brody (Basha Brody’s nephew, based in Chicago).
- We have found ways to engage children in prayer on Sunday mornings utilizing the technology of Zoom and Powerpoint slides (instead of the formal *siddur*/prayer book).
- Our Friday night prayer has been enhanced by the beauty of instrumental music provided by Marty Fogel (saxophone, clarinet, flute) and Eric Friedman (guitar), giving us glimpses into the joyful prayer we will soon experience together in person.
- Our B Mitzvah (formerly “B’nai Mitzvah”) have continued the tradition of being called to the Torah, and we have had the blessing of helping our families to create intimate sanctuaries within their own homes.
- We have experienced several Coffee House programs that have drawn from the talents of our own community’s musicians and singers, and which have allowed us to join with the musicians of Temple Sinai.
- We have been able to seamlessly join with the Rabbis and Cantors from across the state for special Vermont-wide services and programs
- Our Sunday afternoon “Singing Community” found a way to continue to gather online to share in soulful songs, while learning to adapt to the absence of harmony.
- With the help of our amazing tech assistant Dan Rome, our OZ “virtual choir” added much texture and beauty to our High Holy Day services.

I believe that all of the abovementioned adaptations and achievements will inform us as we come back together in person. More than any of the abovementioned adaptations, however, I think these past 13 months have reinforced that the essence of our work as community is our ability to be *present* for one another-- whether by joining together for zoom shiva minyan, B Mitzvah celebrations, or zoom Healing services. May we continue to find ways to show up for one another in this sacred community.

~ *B’shira/In Song,*
Cantor Steve