

## FROM THE RABBI

As the sun sets earlier with the shortening days, summer recedes into memory. These days of transition toward winter are particularly filled with anticipation now, the second fall and winter of pandemic life. This summer as we were rushing to get vaccinated and enjoying a little bit of normalcy, the news reports were anticipating a resurgence of Covid-19 cases as the weather would drive us indoors once again. I didn't want to hear it.

Then Delta came and the resurgence arrived before our indoor gatherings, and here we are – in-between recovery and the potential for another wave of illness. We pray that we may be blessed with the good fortune of a reprieve as vaccines do their job. But I also know that we have learned to be realistic and practical, and necessarily patient.

It is never easy to live in the “in-between” – unable to predict the coming months, hopeful they will be better, and worried at the same time. The good news is that we can impact what will come next, with our thoughtful cautions and restrictions. Of course we cannot control anything other than our own cautious behavior – but at least we have that.

That is where I reflect on the power of community and of faith. I am sharing here a photo that a colleague in the clergy caucus of Vermont Interfaith Action sent to me. Those warm, caring, sharing connections across faith communities are so meaningful and important, especially at moments like this! The photo is from a VIA event in September on the Statehouse steps in Montpelier when we gathered for a Vermont-wide interfaith community service of mourning for the lives lost due to Covid-19. I was standing near Lt. Governor Molly Gray, who came to stand with me during the ceremony, reminding me that the last time we met was at a previous interfaith gathering (I think it was in response to racism). Here we are – bonded through concern and prayer for a better world; a healthier world. This is the beauty of our interfaith community, shared with our civic leaders.

We will need these connections more and more in the coming months as we endure the stresses of the ongoing pandemic and its broad aftermath: economic dislocation and stress, job losses, childcare challenges for working parents, disrupted childhoods for our kids. This is in addition to the grief from loss, suffering from illness and fears associated with the pandemic. We need to respond to these challenges with caring and a shared sense of the common good.

We face many challenges in our world today. Increasing antisemitism worldwide and in the US is certainly weighing on our minds and hearts. In a world rocked with division and increasing expressions of hate, we are all feeling vulnerable. This reality calls us to strengthen and animate our relationships with faith communities, to share learning, support, prayer and partnership. Fortunately, the clergy and lay leaders of Vermont Interfaith Action are with us on this journey; we do not need to struggle with our challenges alone. When we join with our communal partners in mutual support and activism to heal ourselves and heal our world, we all grow in godliness.

We just observed the anniversary of three years since the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. Our partners in the interfaith community and civic leaders joined hands and hearts with us in response to that devastating and frightening event. Those connections of caring and friendship continue now, as we have endured more loss and stress from the pandemic, together. On the heels of this, I am ever grateful to our friends across lines of faith and community for our solidarity and shared caring.

Together, we grieve the losses of these recent months, and build a renewed foundation of hope and love. I look forward to sharing this journey with all of you.

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