

June 8, 2020

Dear Parents and Students:

We hope that this note finds all of you doing well. It is hard to believe that another year of religious school has come and gone. While the year did not end quite the way we had planned, we are so impressed by how you remained flexible and persevered in a difficult environment. Despite the circumstances that were caused by the Covid-19 outbreak, our teachers and all of you adapted and continued Jewish learning. Thank you!

Planning for the 2020-2021 Religious School Year continues and is being guided by our Jewish values, as well as federal, state and local guidance regarding the opening of school and religious facilities. The Education Committee and Room Parents met in May to discuss and approve these changes, which were subsequently presented to the Board.

As you read in the letter sent the other day, while we all wish to return to our synagogue home, it is not presently safe to do so. Therefore, we are planning for our school year to begin remotely on Sunday, September 13th.

As we prepare for the next school year, we want to share with you some important changes to our religious school program. These changes have been in the works for over five years and we believe that we are now in a position to implement them and we are very excited to share them with you:

## **CHANGES TO THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL PROGRAM**

### **Religious School Class Schedule**

- **Preschool-3rd grades will meet Sundays from 9:00-10:45\***
- **4th-6th grades will meet Sundays from 11:00-12:45\* & have a Virtual Class  
Thursdays from 4:00-5:00**
- **7th-10th grades will meet Sundays from 11:00-12:45\* (11:00-12:00 class followed  
by Social Time.**

**\*Virtual Class Meeting Times will be announced prior to the start of school**

### **New Core Curriculum for Grades K-6**

This fall, we will be switching to a new on-line Jewish Values based curriculum with ShalomLearning. This program includes a comprehensive and interactive online program for both Hebrew and Jewish Values/Holiday teaching. ShalomLearning has been used for over ten years by religious schools large and small throughout the United States.

The ShalomLearning curriculum has exceptional resources that will allow the faculty to meet all of our diverse learners' needs. The resources provided will allow them to adapt the lessons by making accommodations and modifications that our students require to best learn new material.

The new curriculum and flexible schedule will offer multiple access points by which our students and families can engage in their Jewish learning. The new curriculum is built to seamlessly transition between in-person and remote learning sessions. Students who are not able to attend in-person classes will still be able to keep pace with their classmates.

You can learn about the ShalomLearning program by visiting their website:

[www.shalomlearning.org](http://www.shalomlearning.org)

### **Thursday Virtual Program - 4:00-5:00 pm**

A significant change this coming year is the switch from in-person to virtual learning on Thursday afternoons for our students in grades 3-6. We understand that the lives of our religious school families are quite complicated. Serving a diverse community made up of students from many different towns with different school schedules, coupled with many other after school activities, makes in-person, midweek attendance very complicated. In recognition of that and to provide flexibility in our children's education, we have made the change from in-person to virtual learning.

The plan for our Thursday virtual classes will be for the Rabbi and Cantor to lead a virtual service for the first 15 minutes and then transition to 45 minutes of virtual class time with their teacher.

### **7th-10th Grade Sunday Program:**

Beginning this fall, our 7th through 10th grade students will attend their program on Sunday morning from 11:00-12:45 with the last 45 minutes serving as social time. This change from Monday evening to Sunday morning has been in the works for a number of years and we are very excited to begin our new structure this fall.

- Our 7th grade curriculum will shift to a program of Bringing Israel Alive through learning modern conversational Hebrew supplemented by Israeli music and culture. Ronit Goldstein (mother of Olivia and Ben Langlan) will be joining our teaching staff to teach this grade.
- Our 8th through 10th grade program will remain largely unchanged with the 8th grade focusing on Holocaust Studies and Sacred Choices. We will also add a new element using a recently published book, "The Failure Book", which highlights how famous figures have been influenced by their failures in life. Our 9th and 10th grades will focus on a modern day study of the Ten Commandments utilizing a new book, "Inscribed: Encounters with the Ten

Commandments”, as well as a focus on Social Justice as we prepare for a new Civil Rights Trip to the south next May.

- Social time will include both organized youth group activities, as well as “hangout” time with their religious school friends.

### **New 11th and 12th Grade Program**

We are thrilled to announce the creation of a new program for our 11th and 12th grade students. We want to be able to harness the connections that we have with our older students. The Clergy will meet with the students twice a month, once in-person at An off-site location, and once virtually.

### **School Registration**

Families who were enrolled in the 2019-2020 school program will have their child's registration rolled over to next year and will be billed the 2020-2021 School Registration Fee, which confirms your their enrollment for the coming year.

### **Where do we go from here?**

Over the course of the summer, we will provide updates on our planning for religious school this coming year. We will also provide additional information on our new ShalomLearning Curriculum so that everyone is prepared for the start of the new school year. Our first day of Religious School for next year is **Sunday, September 13th.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Wishing you all a wonderful, restful and most importantly safe and healthy summer!

Cantor Steven Weiss

Rabbi Shira Joseph

Julie Fox