

Presidential Matters

by Steve Aronowitz



I find it strange, but not at all uncommon, that often when things are not going well, some brightness emerges. And so it is with the Covid – 19 pandemic, a depressing three months and counting. I know from personal experience how difficult this time has become. As a retired teacher, I relished a snow day and rejoiced when it became multiple days off. But this, for so many reasons, was entirely different. I thought about this while in the hospital with no visitors for two weeks. But that's not the point of this article.

Coming home opened my eyes. When I completed a 14-day quarantine, I understood how blurred together everything in life had become. There was little difference between Thursdays and Fridays. The streets were empty no matter what the hour. Like you, we celebrated family birthdays, graduations, and holidays via Zoom. Everything took place at home. "The very shape of society is dissolving in front of our eyes," Sam Anderson, a book critic and writer, wrote in a recent essay in *The New York Times Magazine*, noting that such rituals as workdays and mealtimes had "been drained of meaning. Society has become, in large part, boneless."

As we grapple with the challenging issue of when and how to safely open our synagogue for services, I can share a phone conversation with a member who replied to something I said, "**The synagogue has carried us through this to a large extent.**" **Think about that.** How many times have I written in this column the value of L'Dor V'Dor in our lives, the sense of community that highlights membership? Brightness has emerged and it comes from where else – the synagogue!

Truth is, the synagogue has never closed. What did change was that as soon as the pandemic hit, we became virtually connected. Under the leadership and direction of Rabbi Yaffe and with the assistance of Cantor Shron, we put ourselves in the homes of everyone, those who felt isolated and lonely, those who attended services at the shul weekly, and those who made occasional appearances. It didn't matter. We brought teaching and learning to each home. Who could have possibly thought that we could still be together?

I attended Shabbat services, daily minyans, a birthday and an anniversary of becoming a Bar Mitzvah. I've had the opportunity to contribute to feed the hungry, and to work with others to provide emotional support to those in need. I've been able to comfort members who suffered great personal losses. Often, **I tried to set up meetings of various committees only to be told by numerous members, "I can't. I have the Cantor's class, a Lunch and Learn, a guest speaker, a community Yom HaShoah program."** Of course, none of this replaces getting together in person and, of course, it is our intent to return to being in the synagogue as soon as it is safe for all of us. I assure you we are working towards that goal every day.

We want to assemble at the synagogue. Clearly, however, **paramount in our discussions concerning how and when to hold upcoming Shabbat services and High Holidays services will always be the health and safety of our members and employees.** Mitchell and I appointed respected member, Marc Figelman, to lead a special crisis committee. Marc has experience in this type of crisis management. He is working with the Executive Board which will meet on June 4th. We are regularly in touch with other synagogues and are closely following the guidelines established by local and state government officials. Marc will be sending a letter to all congregants under separate cover outlining the committee's work.

This week, the Nominating Committee voted upon a slate of new trustees to, in turn, be voted upon at an upcoming congregational meeting (date to be determined). There is certainly much to do in the coming months and year.

In closing, I hope you share my positive feeling and have been part of a **very busy time at our synagogue** which, on one hand, is surprising under current conditions. On the other hand, however, **what would you expect! Maybe it's not so amazing that regardless of the anxiety we all feel, the inconveniences that we all experience, it is the synagogue that keeps it all together, providing support to our community and brightening each day.**

On behalf of Mitchell and the entire Board of Trustees, thank you for your support and patience. Stay well.