

Kol Nidre

Good yuntif

I want to start by thanking a few people that I forgot last week. Thank you to Rabbi Ilyse Kramer and Rodney Starr-Kramer for preparing the cards and honey sticks that were handed out to people picking up mahzorim. Thanks to Judy and Marc Young and Cantor Linda Baer for leading the junior congregation services and to Steve Kramer for leading the tot services. Thanks to our new Youth & Family Programming and Engagement Director Erin Friedman for hosting the teen hangouts. And thanks to those leading our Yom Kippur discussion groups - David Zinner, Marc Young, Helene Kass, and David Glaser.

I also want to provide a short update on our clergy searches. Our Rabbi Search Committee, led by Alex Ross, and our Cantor Search Committee, led by Charlene Levine, have been working so hard over the last several months - they started just as the pandemic did, so they've had to do all of their work virtually. I'd also like to thank Stu Berlin, who has been acting as the liaison between the two committees and with the board. On behalf of my co-president Alan Pomerantz and the whole board, I'd like to offer a huge thank you to everyone on those committees and Stu - your dedication, focus, and care for CJC are helping to guide us successfully into the next phase of CJC. I am pleased to report that the application for rabbinical candidates was submitted to Reconstructing Judaism this past week for posting. The Rabbi Search Committee did an outstanding job preparing a thorough application that captured the essence of CJC. We'll provide more information as we get it.

As I was thinking about what to say tonight, I had two thoughts related to this unique moment in time - on Yom Kippur when we are experiencing a worldwide pandemic that seems never ending, nationwide unrest, democracy on the brink of collapse, an economic crisis, and climate change effects on full display. While preparing my remarks, I learned how one commandment, that we all know, relates to both.

Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18 states "Love your neighbor as yourself"

I realized that this commandment has two parts: 1) love your neighbor and 2) love yourself. Which leads to self-forgiveness. Love your neighbor AS YOURSELF.

As we enter the most solemn and contemplative part of the high holiday season, where we ask other people and Gd for forgiveness, I thought about the need to also forgive ourselves. This seems particularly appropriate this year. Some of us are home almost all the time but things still aren't getting done around the house. If you go to work outside the house, just BEING at work is more stressful now so you may come home feeling more drained than usual and unable to do what you used to do at home. The kids are glued to a screen for well over the maximum recommended 2 hours per day, not including school. There are more people to worry about and check on and more causes to support. And the list goes on. It's overwhelming.

"Love your neighbor as yourself" I've never really thought about the second half of that phrase before. . . "as yourself" you can't carry out this commandment if you don't love yourself. And self-forgiveness is part of

self-love. It's been a really tough year for everyone, and right now, we're all literally just trying to stay alive. So this is a reminder to forgive yourself this Yom Kippur and to treat yourself gently and with kindness, as you would treat others.

Another aspect of this commandment is about taking action - doing tikkun olam - to repair the world. I found this quote in an article about tikkun olam from Reconstructing Judaism:

Loving your neighbor as yourself is not about having a warm feeling about [them], though that's a good thing to strive for. It means taking steps to promote their wellbeing (both material and not) as if it were your own.

“Love your neighbor as yourself” then is not a passive statement - it commands action.

One of my favorite quotes is “Be the change you want to see happen”
A quick aside, I learned on quoteinvestigator.com the correct wording for the quote and that it should be attributed to Arleen Lorraine in 1974, not Gandhi.

In these times that feel very dark to many of us, it helps to remember that we are the hands of Gd, we not only have the power but we are commanded to take action to help others.

We should remember also “nobody can do everything; everyone can do something” - we don't have to do it all, but can make a difference by doing something.

I want to remind you about some of the many activities we have right here at CJC where so many of you are doing something. As I noted last week, CJC is a place where we “walk the walk” and that is one of the aspects that I love about our congregation.

Our members feed people at Grassroots and Shepherds Table, work for immigrants rights, support National Alliance on Mental Illness, support Bridges to Housing Stability, repair homes through rebuilding together, hold red cross blood drives; we’ve planted trees on the grounds of the Meeting House, we’ve worked to make sure we are welcoming to people of all gender identities and gender expressions. As I mentioned in my talk last week, our Tzedakah fund supports hundreds of people in our community. And there is a new group to study and learn about how we can better stand up for racial justice - this will be the topic of one of the discussion groups tomorrow. This is a lot and I know I’ve missed some things. If you have questions about any of these activities, or have a suggestion for something new, please check our web site or contact me, Alan, Rabbi Starr, or Cantor Kintisch.

I have hope that 5781 will be a better year and that we will be together this time next year.

I wish you all a meaningful and easy fast.

G'mar Hatimah Tovah!