

The First Hebrew Congregation



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What unusual times we are going through! With the Covid-19 quarantine in effect, we are all brought closer to our family unit and are learning to survive together. This pandemic happening at Passover time is quite a coincidence in the similarity of the stories told -- the plagues in Egypt and our current plague during a time of rising anti-Semitism and bigotry. Just as our forefathers were brought together, so our Jewish families are brought together by our faith and steadfast beliefs. Let us be reminded that we are judged by the mitzvahs we do, and during a

time of crisis, the value of mitzvah is multiplied. We at the FHC are one big family! During our isolation period, let us use the tools of communication to bolster other FHC family members' spirits and give each other strength. May G-D watch over our family!

Passover second night Seder is canceled. All those who need Passover supplies for their home Seder, please contact Barry or Steve, and we will try to get them to you. We already have a supply of Passover Matzo and soup mix.

Due to the uncertainty of quarantine time, we may have to modify the summer schedule. We hope the summer Orthodox minyan and Reform and Conservative Friday night services will start at the end of June. We will give you dates as we know them.

From Rabbi Cohen

Transition and change are always difficult but nothing new to the Jewish people. Indeed, we are in the midst of such an annual period of transition in the Jewish calendar. The weeks from just before Purim until Passover are filled with four special Shabbatot—HaShekel, Zakhor, Parah & HaHodesh. Each represents an aspect of change of routine and preparation for the upcoming holidays. The Rabbis realized that changes occurred and that transitions were necessary but they also were aware that these transitions could be unsettling unless we were prepared for them and realized that with preparation, we could get past them

and move on in a positive fashion. It is the last of the four—HaHodesh—which especially underscores this attitude. It falls on the Shabbat immediately before the new month of Nisan (the month in which Passover is celebrated) or on the new month itself if it coincides with Shabbat. The special Torah reading for this Shabbat is taken from the beginning of Exodus, chapter 12, in which the first Passover celebrated at the time of the Exodus was described. It begins with the words that this month is to be the first of the months—i.e. a new beginning and a new year (one of four New Years we have in our calendar according to the Rabbis). It was a reminder that just as the Exodus represented a new life so, too, is our opportunity each year to begin with a fresh spring. This year, in the midst of the coronavirus, that message is so apropos. It is a reminder that we will get through the difficult times as our ancestors did in leaving Egypt and beginning a new life. We will overcome this crisis. Our daily lives will be interrupted (as they no doubt already have been) and a new normal established. Everything from sports to education is facing the need to be adaptable. Online learning is becoming the standard.

Passover, also, may take some flexibility and imagination to celebrate and, if need be, we can celebrate later in a delayed fashion. Again, our tradition recognized this also by establishing Pesah Sheni (a second, delayed Passover) for those forced to miss or alter the regularly scheduled one. When we do come to celebrate, I pray that it will be with a renewed sense of vision and strengthened health to face the future with even greater purpose. Please let me hear from you and, again, know that you are in our prayers and thoughts especially through these trying times. We look forward to returning to South Haven again this fall for the holidays.

Thank you, Jerry Morgan, for funding the Louis Mendelson Tree of Life, a tribute to his father. The Tree of Life has individual leaves that can be engraved to honor an individual or an occasion. For instance, you could honor a wedding, a Bar Mitzvah, or a person. A leaf can accommodate 4 lines of about 20 characters each, plus a fifth line dedicated for a date. The cost per leaf, including your engraving, is \$180. If you would like to give more, we would welcome your additional support. We will engrave the leaf and place it on the Tree. Contact Remey, Barry or Steve if you are interested in a leaf to honor someone and support the synagogue at the same time.



Condolences

We are sorry to hear of the passing of Pamela Beth Sofferin, Remey Rubin's sister. Our thoughts are with you.

Thank you

Thank you to Amy Lorber and Brian Ebbers for donating 6 boxes of matzo, which we will distribute to those in need. If you cannot locate matzo for Passover, give us a call, and we will do our best to get it to you.