

# Congregation Ahavas Achim

P.O. Box 334

Westfield, MA 01086

## JULY - AUG 2020 NEWSLETTER

<http://www.congregationahavasachim.org/>

### **YEAR-END SERVICE:**

Please join us for our last service of the year on Saturday, June 27, 2020.

We have decided to hold our end-of-year service via Zoom, out of respect for our members and friends who aren't comfortable getting together as a group at this point in time.

Our plan is to convene at 6:00 pm to conduct a very informal discussion to look back over the past year as we begin our planning for 2020/2021. We are especially interested in your feedback and suggestions for what you'd like to see more of, or less of, next year.

As you know, we are a very small congregation, which presents its own unique challenges and opportunities. Please tell your friends about us and let them know that we have Cantor Reaboi, who has brought fresh ideas, beautiful music and a commitment to teaching and sharing all things Jewish to our congregation. At the conclusion of our discussion, Cantor Reaboi will lead us in a brief Havdalah service.

We hope that you will join us for our final get-together of the year and we are also hoping that this will be our final Zoom service!

We'll be in touch over the summer regarding High Holiday plans and any other announcements.

We appreciate all you do to support Congregation Ahavas Achim.

The Executive Board

### **DONATIONS:**

*To Our Members and Supporters:*

*We want to thank all of you who responded to our recent request to help us with an end-of-year donation. We truly appreciate your generosity and support.*

Sandy Mackler – in loving memory of Leah Ruth Chase – General Fund

Gail Wertel – in honor of my wonderful daughter Fran Eisenberg – General Fund

Marcia Kahn – in memory of my mother Sadye Leben – General Fund

Roslyn Brown – in honor of Cantor Reaboi for all he has done during the pandemic – General Fund

Nancy Rapisarda – General Fund

Linda and Larry Friedman - General Fund

Geri Johnson – General Fund

Elsa Rosenak – General Fund

Nate and Carol Rosenthal – General Fund

Jeffrey Stoloff – General Fund

*\*Donations received as of 6/15/20*

## Donor Quotes:

*“We have enjoyed following the progress of the congregation thru the emails. The continued success of the group is important to us, though we spend less and less time in Westfield. Thank you for the work you do.”*

*“This congregation of people have meant so much to me in years past. I am grateful that I can help. Shalom.”*

## Cantor’s Message (June, 2020):

Dear Friends,

We have come to the end of the year and are about to begin our summer break until September. It's hard to believe that our last service for the year is just two weeks away. To say this year was different is an understatement. A twist on the Four Questions comes to mind:

**“Ma Nishatana Hashana Hazeh - Why is this year different from the others?”**

While it is true that the Pandemic caused an upheaval at the University and prevented us from doing activities and live services, it can also be said that we were able to persevere by holding virtual services and meetings. The Jewish Student Organization even had a Havdalah and Social event on Zoom, just last month.

Judaism has so many layers of laws and traditions, it is hard to believe how flexible we can be. But in fact, this is exactly how the Jewish religion is supposed to work! The most significant example of Jewish flexibility was during the final days of the Second Temple. When the Temple was sacked and destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 C.E., Judaism should have fallen apart. Without the Temple and the daily sacrifices, how was Judaism to survive? The Rabbis of the Great Assembly (Sanhedrin) saw this coming, and created a way for Judaism to thrive in a world with no Temple. In their great wisdom, they had started compiling the Mishnah and the Talmud decades before the fall of the Temple. These were teachings and rulings of how the average person could practice Judaism organically, in their daily lives without the obligation of sacrifices. Commentaries were added to the Talmud and expounded upon during the next six centuries. The Siddur, or prayer book, replaced the sacrificial rites. Like the Talmud with its layer of commentaries, prayers and blessings were added through the years. Remarkably, the Siddur, with its prayers for all occasions, is really a history of the Jewish people. While the Laws of the oral and written Torah did not change, the interpretations of practicing Judaism has remained flexible.

**Some time ago, I attended a seminar on the Talmud where the speaker likened Judaism to a flowing river, adjusting to the rocks, trees and landscape in order to keep flowing into the sea. The opposite of a river, the speaker explained, is a walled city. If you shelter the Torah from innovative interpretations, then Jews will never change and won't be able to keep up with an ever-changing world. I see Congregation Ahavas Achim as a flowing river, being able to adapt and thrive in a world gone upside down. Not only do we continue to have services and meetings, we are still represented in the City's Soup Kitchen. May we continue to thrive and be a light to the communities we share this planet with.**

**Kein Y'hi Ratzon, May this be G-d's will!**

**On another subject, I would like to remind you that Judaism doesn't stop during the summer. I encourage each of you to keep learning, performing G'milut Chasadim (Acts of Kindness), visiting the sick, and feeding the hungry. Please continue to pray for the health and welfare of all of our CAA Family, and show gratitude for the things we have, no matter how great or how small. My contribution this summer will be keeping in touch with all of you and sending out lessons and "food for thought" emails. I wish you an enjoyable and safe summer.**

**Kol Hakavod, may you go in strength!**

**L'Shalom,  
Cantor Colman Reaboi  
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