Rosh Hashanah 5781 was, I must admit, one of the oddest experiences I have ever had as a rabbi, leading a congregation on Yamim Noraim in the empty sanctuary of PSJC. But looking out into the empty pews, knowing that no one was there, I closed my eyes and saw you sitting in your seats. In my mind’s eye, I could see the people who always sat near the window, those who liked to be right up front, those more comfortable in the back, and others who would catch my eye from the balcony. I stood in that empty room and heard you pounding on the benches, singing away, I imagined friends whispering to one another, and children in their parents’ arms — all of us just singing our hearts out.

I was grateful to have had 20 years of joyous song in that space to call upon and to bring to that “empty” sanctuary.

In its own way, Rosh Hashanah 5781 was utterly inspiring. For even though in some ways it was a solo experience — I hope I will never again receive so many ark openings in a single day nor be given the honor of lifting the Torah on Yom Kippur! — I also had never felt the presence of this community so deeply. I looked out at the giant screen in front of me, and even though I generally could not hear your voices, I could see your faces — one Zoom box at a time. I saw the passion people brought to their prayers, the joy at being together, even in that less-than-ideal fashion...and it made me smile.

And then we sang together (on mute, of course) with the help of the magnificent videos produced with vision, creativity and love by members of our community. And it was upon seeing and hearing our voices together on that screen that I knew we would be okay as a community. We found a way, during that remarkably different High Holy Day season, to open up, to be flexible and determined in the ways we connected, the ways we prayed, the ways we built our community.

And though 5781 was not at all the year we planned nor hoped it would be, it was filled with moments such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur which surprised me and filled me with gratitude for this community. I am enormously grateful:

♦ For our B’nai Mitzvah students and their families who never failed to amaze me with their flexibility and creativity, each family finding their own way to celebrate in the midst of a pandemic.
♦ For our PAI seniors who have become experts on Zoom programming, offering such a variety of opportunities for exploration and connection in our community.
♦ For our children and their families who learned how to learn and how to have fun on Zoom.
♦ For our Hebrew School teachers and madrichim who transformed screens into engaging sites of Jewish learning.
♦ For our Pitputnikim and others who took a chance and used Zoom to expand our Hebrew and Israel-programming this year.
♦ For the members of Rodfei Tzedek who never stopped reminding us of our obligation to our neighbors and the pursuit of justice, even when we may have just wanted to hunker down at home.
♦ For our Avodah committee, constantly re-creating services and celebrations even when we could not come together and then again when we could.
♦ For our Gmach committee and Hevra Kaddisha that supported people in the most difficult times and found ways to engage in virtual shmirah when in-person shmirah was too dangerous—and to do so with immense sincerity.
♦ For our President, David Tepper, and the Board of Trustees as well as leaders of our committees who worked harder than they may have ever imagined, to figure out how PSJC could thrive, financially, programmatically, emotionally, spiritually, and communally in this very strange and challenging year.
♦ For the Membership committee and others who stepped in to help us deliver holiday packages, to organize outings to baseball games, to simply connect our members one to the other.
For those who created new initiatives, like “Faces of PSJC” and “Shem VaNer,” giving hope and vision in this dark year.

For those who showed up at Zoom-minyan every Friday night or Wednesday morning and those who came together for Shabbat.

For Lev Tahor and so many others who helped us welcome Shabbat on our screens with beauty and joy.

For the dogs and cats of our community who regularly visited our minyanim, meetings, and programs.

For our rabbinic intern Maor—who, with wisdom and good humor, got to know our community entirely on Zoom last year—and will, God-willing, be able to meet everyone in person as they begin their second year of internship this Fall.

For our amazing staff: Aileen, Antonia, Judy, Patrick, Piper, Sherrod and Isael for working day in and day out, with patience and passion, with flexibility and deep dedication to keep the shul functioning and the spirit of PSJC strong.

For all of you and so much more, for teachers and friends who have given so much of themselves to support one another and to strengthen this community… I have found myself deeply grateful throughout 5781.

As we enter this new year of 5782, I am filled with a mix of hope and trepidation. I do not expect to be standing alone in the sanctuary this Rosh Hashanah, and I look forward to welcoming the new year surrounded by PSJCers (in person, on Zoom and in my mind’s eye). May we all feel one another’s presence, wherever we are, and may we as a community and each of us as individuals be blessed to find at least as many (and hopefully so many more) reasons for gratitude as were ours in the year that has passed.

Shanah Tovah U’Metukah!

From David Tepper, President

Shana Tovah! It’s hard to believe that we have arrived at the High Holy Days again, still under the shadow of the Covid pandemic. Last year’s Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services surpassed our expectations for what we could accomplish and for the meaning and purpose of an online experience, and we came out of the holiday season feeling inspired by the resilience and resourcefulness of our community.

Through the fall and winter, we adjusted from crisis mode into daily life with Covid. We are lucky to have our yard, where we were able to gather most weeks for Shabbat morning services, and it was wonderful to be together in-person and to reconnect with those who were not comfortable using Zoom. On those mornings when we read about the Israelites’ makeshift camps in the dessert, we felt special kinship.

Each stage in the calendar brought new accommodations and innovations. We had, perhaps, our most active and communal Hanukah ever, meeting each night online and on stoops. The Megilah reading and Purim spiel set a new standard for silliness, musicality, and video production. PAI continued with its ambitious and diverse programming, even spinning off a popular photography club.

Aileen and the Hebrew School teachers found endless ways to connect with students and maintain a sense of community. While learning from home certainly brought challenges, it also opened up opportunities to build bridges between shul and home, with families engaging in at-home activities together and parents more involved in their children’s Hebrew School experience.

With the leadership of Rabbi Carie, Tomer Geckler, and several dedicated PSJC members, we initiated a vibrant conversation about contemporary culture and politics in Israel, with a series of guest speakers, film screenings, and informal discussions. PSJC is perhaps uniquely situated in the Brooklyn context to host a challenging and respectful conversation about Israel, and I hope these programs can become a point of strength and growth for our community.
In many ways, it has been an exhausting year for our staff. As many professional Jewish leaders have reported, the challenges of reinventing regular programming, supporting members under extraordinary isolation and stress, and finding ways to bring meaning and community to remote life-cycle events, all while staying on top of constant online programming, has pushed our staff to the limit. I know I speak for the membership when I express our gratitude for their unflagging dedication to PSJC.

This year has also been an opportunity to regroup, plan, and reflect.

We have been rebuilding our Rodfei Tzedek and social-justice infrastructure, with special focus on antiracism initiatives. We have begun a process of introspection, talking to members of color about their experiences in the community and soliciting guidance about how and where to engage to make PSJC a more equitable and inclusive organization. Looking beyond PSJC, I’m very excited that we have joined the Jewish Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform and have begun adding our voices to their advocacy work, including the successful passage of the “Less Is More” parole reform act in June. I look forward to the growth of these programs and initiatives over the coming months, with more opportunities for PSJC members to get involved.

The Board of Trustees has been looking hard at some underlying structural and financial issues through a subcommittee focused on long-term financial sustainability. We are aware that we face significant demographic headwinds, with participation in formal synagogue life declining across many age groups and our Park Slope neighborhood becoming increasingly unaffordable for young families. At the same time, expectations for the range of programs we offer and the professionalism of the organization continue to rise, putting stress on the capacity of our staff. Growth in membership will be required, and the work of attracting and keeping members will have to advance on many fronts. We look forward to broadening this conversation, sharing our work to date and hearing from members on these important issues.

I am very pleased to report that we have renewed Rabbi Carter’s contract and that this fall she will begin her third decade as the leader of our community. In discussing Rabbi Carie’s vision for PSJC and the next stage of her professional life, it became clear that we need to do more to support her and to help her achieve a reasonable work-life balance, to the extent such a thing is possible for a rabbi! To that end, we will be advertising shortly for a part-time staff member, who will help to cover life-cycle events and other regular rabbinical duties so that Rabbi Carie can more effectively plan for time off, pursue professional development, and bring new focus to priority programs and initiatives. We hope that fulfilling this contractual obligation will be an opportunity for growth and renewal on many levels, and I look forward to sharing developments on this front after the holidays.

I want to thank the trustees and officers of the Board for doing a tremendous job steering the ship in troubled waters and for their unwavering dedication to PSJC. Also many thanks to those who served on committees this year, in particular the Avodah Committee, the Hebrew School Committee, PAI, the Covid Advisory Committee, the Membership Committee, and Communications, all of whom were called on to reinvent the wheel in their own right.

I look forward to seeing you over the holidays, in-person or on Zoom, and I wish you all a healthy and sweet New Year.
Throughout the High Holy Day season, we frequently sing, “Hashiveinu Adonai eilecha v’nashuvah, chadeish yameinu k’kedem - Return us, Eternal One, let us return! Renew our days, as they were in the past. "In this prayer we yearn for a return to the way things once were, to go back to normal. In the field of Jewish education, professionals spent the summer talking about the emotional and physical health of our students as top priority, but that we cannot return to an old normal. The status quo for how we teach about Judaism and form lasting connections to each other and tradition has shifted. The term "Covid keepers," has been coined to reflect the lessons we have learned in the past 18 months how to best reach today’s students and families.

At PSJC Hebrew School, community and connection have always been at the heart of our curriculum, but in the weeks and months ahead, we will use them as a lens through which we see everything we teach, to build lasting Jewish social-emotional-spiritual (SES) skills. How do the words of Shema help us learn to listen to each other? How can the story of Moses hitting the rock demonstrate what to do when we are overwhelmed by our emotions? How can forming a class brit (covenant) help our students be the builders of the next generation of Jewish communal leaders? SES learning will be at the heart of how we build our lessons. In addition to how we teach, Covid has shown us new ways to use our space. We’ll be outside more this fall and into the winter. When we are inside, we’ll use flexible seating tools to spread out more around the room. The teachers and I are looking forward to continuing to revisit the how, where, when, and why of Jewish tradition to create meaningful and lasting learning for our students.

Beyond Hebrew School, we also look ahead to a year of youth and family programming. We will continue to have youth Shabbat services outside, as long as weather permits, bringing our “It’s Friday” classes into the park and using the stoop more for informal programming throughout the year. Gesher will be back in person for engaging discussions for teens, and Park Slope BBYO will be using our space throughout the fall, as an opportunity for social events and leadership development.

This past summer I participated in youth mental health first aid training, knowing that the past year, no matter the direct impact of Covid on an individual family, was traumatic for so many of our youth. PSJC will continue to be a safe space for our teens to connect with each other and their community as they navigate the challenges of adolescence. It has been a challenging eighteen months, and while we had hoped that this season would be more of a return to “normal,” there is so much to find beautiful and hopeful in the resilience of PSJC and the Jewish community at large. This High Holy Day season, when I sing the words of Hashiveinu, I will be focusing on “renew our days." As with so many of our prayers, it is a communal wish: return us. It is not about a yearning to return to the way things were. It is about finding the inspiration and the strength for another season of learning impacted by this pandemic, together. Shana tovah u’metukah. May you have a sweet and happy year.

Dear PSJC Community,

As we head into the holiest of seasons and period of deep reflection, I can’t help but share my deepest gratitude to a community that I have come to know so well over the past two years. When my pending departure was announced in July, I was overwhelmed by a sea of warm, thoughtful, and tear-inducing emails from membership. And I printed them all. And I will keep them all. And I will continue to look back on this small, fierce, awesome, and sometimes quirky-in-a-good-way community in Park Slope in the months and years ahead.

No matter where I’ve been or what I’ve done, it has always been my hope to have planted seeds: seeds of thought, action, or inspiration. It’s important that you know, in return, that you have all left an indelible mark on me. We’ve been through too much together in a very short amount of time: flood, fire, and
pandemic. There will be a time to reflect on this, but right now, there is strong momentum as we head into the High Holy Days. Our incredible staff is full speed ahead in an effort to meet our community where they feel most comfortable: the Sanctuary, yard, or over Zoom at home or visiting family and friends. It is a blessing that we live in a time that makes this communication possible.

Speaking of blessings, it has been an honor to work with the small group of professionals that we have here on staff at PSJC, and especially with our amazing Rabbi. I’m not sure I have the words to fully convey how committed the PSJC staff is to the membership and community. I deeply respect them all for their individual talents and how well they work together seamlessly as a team. This small group can move mountains together! Finally, to all of the members who support the day-to-day initiatives that keep the pulse of our community, from executive leadership to board members to committee chairs and members: “wow” comes to mind. Your commitment is above and beyond.

I hope I’ve left our very capable lay leadership with feedback that is helpful in this staffing transition with a nod to the future. Our presence in Park Slope is better than ever. Membership applications are on a sharp rise. Most importantly, these new members are individuals and families who truly want to be invested in the community. That is something of which I am truly proud.

I will sincerely miss you and will continue to work in PSJC’s best interest, which includes a smooth, meaningful transition with my successor.

Thank you all, from the bottom of my heart. - Piper

From Maor Greene, Senior Rabbinic Intern

Hi PSJC! In early March 2019, I set foot in PSJC for the first time to interview with Rabbi Carter for the rabbinic intern position. I was excited by the description of the congregation as warm and eager-to-learn. I also fell in love with the sanctuary and its acoustics – I hoped to continue developing as a prayer leader and thought the space would be delightful when lifting up my voice with the community. Little did I realize that I would not set foot in the sanctuary again for my entire internship!

Despite never having met a single member in person, I can heartily confirm that PSJCers are a friendly and intellectually curious bunch. Last year I was continually surprised at how much human connection was actually possible over Zoom. It was such a pleasure to learn and pray with everyone this past year and I feel confident in saying that I learned far more from you than you learned from me.

This year I am back for more! Not being able to do an in-person internship at PSJC last year was a huge factor in my decision to return for another year. I had a sense of unfinished business and having missed out of seeing many of you in person. Instead of imagining angels hovering around my monitor while attending and leading services, I will hopefully get to see many of you in person, face to face for the first time. God willing, we can all stay safe as we connect in the various ways now available to us.

This year in addition to the usual rabbinic intern responsibilities, I am going to focus my teaching on three particular areas:

1. Prayer and spirituality – I want to explore with you how Jewish tradition can support us as we go through life’s ups and downs, helping us find connection and meaning in our lives. This will include text-based classes, as well as some mindfulness-based prayer experiences designed for more personal spiritual exploration.

2. Environmental activism – I will be continuing to share Torah around environmental work that is unfortunately becoming more and more urgent each year. I will also be happy to facilitate the emergence of a climate action group at PSJC, as well as share in the work I continue to do with Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action.

3. Gemilut Chasidim (Acts of Loving Kindness) – I will be working closely with Rabbi Carter to provide more training to members around how to best emotionally and spiritually give care to one another. This may involve forming and occasionally facilitating spiritual reflection groups.

I hope 5782 will be a year of blessing for all – I know I already feel blessed to be continuing with PSJC for another year! L’chayyim!
Welcome to the new Brooklyn Shaliach!

A *Shaliach* is an emissary tasked by Israel’s Jewish Agency to strengthen and build relationships between Israelis and Jews in the Diaspora, to deepen mutual understanding. While we were sorry to say goodbye to our wonderful *Shaliach* Tomer Geckler and his family, we are excited to welcome the new Brooklyn *Shaliach*, Elad Bar Ilan.

Born in Tel Aviv in 1981, as a child Elad loved biking, running and hiking. After high school, Elad joined a pre-army academy located in a low socio-economic neighborhood in Jerusalem, participating in informal educational activities with neighborhood youth. After finishing IDF service in a special forces unit, he joined the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) for a tour guide training course, during which he also worked with “youth at risk” placed in a government boarding school. Ever since, Elad’s main goal has been to share the passion that he has towards the country and to strengthen the connection between the Jewish people and Israel. In pursuit of this goal, he has been involved in Jewish education as a leader of many different groups both in Israel and the Former Soviet Union, under the Jewish agency. He also has led North American youth groups in the March of the living in Poland, and trained tour guides to lead youth groups for the Jewish Agency and “Israel Experience.”

Building on his wish to help people engage with Israel, Elad also developed a comprehensive touring agency for individuals, families, delegations, organizations that wish to experience Israel in an unique way. In addition to these activities, Elad has contributed articles in Israeli internet newspapers and the “Forward.”

Elad lives in *Kibbutz Hulda* with his wife, Neomi, who runs the touring agency with him, and his sons Nevo, Aner and Sinai. ” In his “free time Elad has studied wine making and has produced barrels of unique wines, and loves to bike, run and hike throughout the wonderful land of Israel.

Shem Ve’Ner

Each person had a name  
Every name is a candle  
And behind each candle there is a story

A few years ago, two women in Israel created an organization called *Shem Ve’ner* committed to remembering each person murdered in the *Shoah* (Holocaust) by creating personal remembrance candles to be lit in every home on *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day). Each candle is dedicated to a designated person, and on each candle, there is a QR code that connects to each individual story, reminding us that each person had a name and a life, not just a number.

PSJC is joining in this project in two phases. In the first phase we will collect names and stories of individuals who died in the *Shoah*. In the second phase, starting in the fall, PSJC teens volunteers will buddy with an adult mentor and together they will do research to try to discover the stories behind the names for which no story has yet been found.

All of the stories will be collected on a dedicated website called “Behind the Candle.”

If you are interested in submitting names for the project, helping a teen researching for stories, or translating stories and documents from other languages, please contact Rabbi Carter (rabbi@psjc.org), Daniel Marcu (dmarcu2010@gmail.com), or Joel Levy (joeljlevy@gmail.com).

Remembering six million human souls is in many ways unimaginable. But commemorating one name, learning one story, reminds us that there was life before the fire and life will continue — in the relatives that survived, in new family members born after, and in all who hear the stories. In this way, their memories will be upheld, forever.
Positive Aging Initiative (PAI)

Since the pandemic began, PSJC’s Positive Aging Initiative has been playing a vital role in keeping the PSJC community connected. During this time we’ve held more than 60 Shared Wisdom workshops, with talented members teaching other members about an extraordinary range of topics. More than 125 PSJC members have taken part, many multiple times. PAI is a home-grown effort, inaugurated four years ago by a few PSJCers who envisioned it as a way of building community among shul members ages 50 and beyond. Since then, it has grown way beyond our expectations, and our goal of creating a new appreciation of aging as a time of possibility and opportunity is being achieved on an ongoing basis.

Built on PAI members’ expertise in many areas, our Shared Wisdom sessions have run a huge topical gamut. Topics have included: Making American Pickles, Dante, Green Investments, Fungus (really!), the “Founding of The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and the “New Woman.” We’ve also brought in outside organizations for workshops on topics relevant to aging, such as Medicare, Advance Directives, archiving documents, and hearing loss.

“Aging is an extraordinary process in which you become the person you always should have been.” - David Bowie

Members of PAI have been having fun and making friends, reinforcing PSJC’s ability to serve as an exceptional caring community. Social activities like our Book and Photo Clubs have become staples of members’ lives, and the annual PAI Dinner in the Sukkah and December 25th Walk are eagerly awaited each year. We’ve just added an annual Chanukah gathering to the mix and are planning more opportunities for socialization.

PSJC’s PAI is the only program for older adults that is specifically geared to a Jewish Brownstone Brooklyn audience, and we are proud to be a model for engaging this vital cohort of aging, creative professionals. Activities are scheduled so that both retirees and those who are still working, as well as those who are caretakers of others in this age group, can participate. To check out what’s going on, take a look at our weekly E-Blasts, or scan the PSJC website’s Events section for PAI activities. For more information, answers to questions, ideas and feedback (please!), e-mail us at positiveaging@psjc.org.

PSJC Security Committee Update

Good news! PSJC has secured two federal security grants, each in the amount of $100,000, and has retained a security consultant to assist with the project. The grants will enable us to replace or secure the exterior gates and doors with electronic opening and closing mechanisms, equip internal doors for lock-down security, install an internal alarm/panic system, enhance our existing CCTV surveillance, replace the yard fencing and improve our window integrity. We have not yet received federal authorization to begin work on the first grant and are awaiting authorization to begin the work proposed in the second grant. It would be cost-effective to do the work contemplated under both grants at the same time, and we are hoping that the authorization timing will support this. We believe that the Department of Homeland Security will issue the final work authorization for the second grant in the very near future. Once we have received the authorizations, we will seek competitive bids for all the work, select a contractor or contractors, and begin to upgrade our security in the coming months. Stay tuned!

-Leslie Salzman
Avodah Committee Update

As we get ready for another round of High Holy Days, we are once again in a new mode. The theme of “return,” of teshuvah, permeates the holidays, whether in the cycle of the year or the personal teshuvah of Yom Kippur. This year, we certainly stand on our own knife edge of Return. The Pandemic is not over — as we are constantly reminded, as fears of the Delta variant increase and vaccination rates stagnate; as we watched the Summer Olympics with empty stands and masked officials; as we considered whether or not to travel, and how, this summer. However, we are also in a position to look forward to a return, if not to “normal,” then to something that more closely resembles the life we had before. To make a really obvious metaphor, if Zoom services have been a feature of our exile, services in the Sanctuary stand potentially before us for our return.

This will be a High Holy Days of remembering. We cannot forget what this strange time has been like—the sense of isolation and separation, loneliness and fear, wondering how long this might go on (as we still are) and how we might be affected. There are tragedies within it to remember too—loss of loved ones, of jobs and livelihoods, of favorite places (even though it has been coming for a while, I’m going to mourn the 5th Avenue Key Food for a while), of certain kinds of certainty and security, and I could go on. But there also been profound moments of connection and awareness, and we have to remember those too. How did it feel, early on, to join Virtual PSJC and see all our friends — admittedly in small boxes on a screen — but there we were, together, finding ways to sing and worship and be together, despite all these obstacles? How moving were those early morning Minyans and Kabbalat Shabbats where we filled multiple screens and felt deeply connected despite the space between us? And how exciting, how enriching were the small ways we were able to be together “in person,” whether collecting our holiday bags from the yard, or going to Stoop Shofar to hear those shattering blasts, albeit from across the street? And how wonderful, after we waited out our second vaccine, to be able to hug our friends, to see each other without masks, and even to join together for services in the in-between space of the yard? Whether at PSJC or in any other aspect of our lives, instead of trying to put the Exile of Covid behind us, we should allow it to change us.

I wonder if we might also remember those early days of Covid as it slowly moves behind us. Since March 2020, I have missed only one Wednesday morning Minyan and two Kabbalat Shabbats. And at all the ones I have attended, there has been a minyan. So maybe not multiple screens of people lately, but no one has not been able to say Kaddish for a loved one, whether for a recent death or a yarzheit. Could we commit ourselves, schedules permitting, to making sure that this kind of participation continues once we return to the building? And might we preserve the spirit of support, of gratitude that we can be together, even in these strange circumstances, once we’re back together? Can we recognize, for instance, that our daveners and leyners and haftarah chanters are giving us their time, and their hearts, and their love, and that even if the tunes they choose may not be our favorites, or if they make some mistakes (and this from someone who swears that if she ever davens Morning Minyan and gets all three Kaddishes right, the Messiah will come), or go at a speed that isn’t the one we want (too fast, too slow, too fast on the slow stuff and too slow on the fast stuff), to be grateful for everything they have brought to the (reader’s) table?

It seems to me, standing in this moment of in-between, that we have to do this. Our Return cannot be to the “old normal.” It is within our grasp to make our “new normal” a better one, to build a truly diverse, equitable, and inclusive PSJC, if we commit to it. We summoned our kindness and patience and flexibility in Exile; surely we can do it as part of our Return? We can, we should, we must remember the commandments reflected in the mirror of our exile, and remember that the “land flowing with milk and honey” will only be there if we commit to building it together. L’Shanah Tovah u’Metukah

-Angela Weisl, Chair
Hevra Kadisha Update

Although the PSJC Hevra Kadisha could not do in-person Taharah (preparing the body) or Shmira (watching over the body) during 2020-21 pandemic, we were nevertheless able to provide virtual Shmira on a number of occasions. The Hevra continues to monitor the Covid numbers in New York City, and vaccinated members of the team who are willing and able will, we hope, be able to return to providing comfort to families of the departed by performing in-person Shmira and Tahara.

- Elizabeth Wollman, Co-Chair

Cemetery Committee Update

Have you ever wondered what the PSJC Cemetery Committee was all about? PSJC holds rights to gravesites at Beth David Cemetery (in Elmont, Long Island, near Belmont Racetrack) and New Mount Carmel Cemetery (in Glendale, Queens, near the Jackie Robinson Interborough Parkway). Graves in these cemeteries, like others in and around New York City, are scarce and valuable — but members of PSJC in good standing may purchase them from PSJC at favorable prices (currently, $1,350 per standard grave in Beth David Cemetery; $1,800 in Mt. Carmel).

The Cemetery Committee is authorized to complete the paperwork on behalf of PSJC relating to these cemeteries. The current members of the Cemetery Committee are: Matthew Eilenberg, chair; David Rosen; Cathy Monblatt (through December 2021); and Florence Hutner. You can get more details about purchasing graves, registering deeds with the cemeteries, restrictions regarding burials, etc. by contacting the office, Rabbi Carter, or the Committee (cemetery@psjc.org). Of course, the Committee works closely with other PSJC working groups regarding end-of-life issues: the Hevra Kadisha (for Taharah, Shmira, etc.); the Simple Funeral Plan (for funeral and burial); and G’mach (supporting ailing members, shiva, supporting grieving members, etc.).

And in the meanwhile, may we all be written in the Book of Life for 5782!

- Matt Eilenberg, Chair

Hebrew School Committee Update

The 2020/2021 Hebrew School year was certainly memorable! While we missed seeing each other in person, it was wonderful that students were able to have a full year of Hebrew School. Students were even able to be together in person outdoors in the spring. We all missed some of our big in-person events, like the annual Purim Carnival, but we were able to have a great year by being creative! The whole community enjoyed the Zoom “Purim Party at The Palace.” Our Mishloach Manot fundraiser happened via pick-up and delivery. The sixth grade Tzedakah Fair was able to be held in person by switching the date to May and holding it in the yard!

The Hebrew School Committee is ready for another great year. We are excited to welcome Karin Ulman as Co-Chair of the Hebrew School Committee. Karin, a parent of three post b’ni mitzvah children, will be using her expertise to help develop programming for our teens and tweens.

One of our goals this year will be to focus on forging connections between parents and families. Last year we missed out on the opportunity to get to know each other at pick up and drop off. We will make sure there are opportunities this year to meet, connect, and schmooze.

- Dina Nadler-Serber, Co-Chair
**Lev Tahor update**

*Lev Tahor* is alive and well!

The first Friday night of the month throughout the pandemic we have continued to join in song to welcome *Shabbat* together with our community *Lev Tahor* gathering. We’ve been able to joyously be together over Zoom, and although we have had to take a hiatus on our post-davenning potluck/programs, we have survived - and thrived! Despite all the obstacles, we have shared familiar and new melodies, topical quotes and readings. We are looking forward to returning to our former in-person(full program format sometime this year, but in the meanwhile hold the date for our first *Lev Tahor* of 5782 on Friday night October 1 - location/time/logistics to be shared as the date gets closer!

- Freddie Brooks

**Building Committee Update**

Things to Behold, Things Seen and Unseen

*Things to Behold:* New lighting with LED fixtures has been installed around the *Bimah* arch in the main sanctuary — a vast improvement over the pre-existing fluorescent tubes. The color of the new lights casts a warmth that enhances the decoration in the *Bimah* area. This upgrade was made possible by a generous dedicated gift. Thank you! And thanks also to Ann Kale Lighting of Santa Barbara for counsel on design and installation.

Also to be noted (and hard to ignore), is that the 30’ by 30’ tent in the yard, which served us well during spring and summer services, has been replaced by a 30’ by 60’ tent to accommodate greater numbers for the High Holy Days. Patrick Francis, our Facilities Manager, and staff have been active in lighting the expanded space and otherwise preparing it for services, beginning with *Slichot.*

Patrick, Sherod and the facilities crew have been amazing, supporting sound and video with ever more creative and innovative approaches to keep services and events available for in-person events where possible, and Zoom and livestreaming over the past year and a half.

*Things Seen:* Led by Patrick, the staff resurfaced the floors in the Administration and the Hebrew School offices damaged in the sewer backup of two years ago – the laminate flooring makes the spaces far more welcoming. They moved on to sand and stain the *Bimah* floor in the lower sanctuary where decades of active use showed all too clearly.

*Things Unseen:* The facilities staff caulked the sidewalk running along the wall on the yard side to eliminate water penetration through the foundation. This work enabled restorative plastering and painting on the inside walls below grade. You might not see it, but you will experience the benefit in maintaining our building into the future!

- Peter Holmes, Chair

**Inclusion Committee Update**

PSJC remains wholeheartedly committed to the inclusion of all community members. COVID has reinforced the importance of maintaining strong interpersonal connections, regardless of our physical proximity and individualized circumstances/needs. The ability to connect PSJC congregants and families both near and far from our homes via Zoom events and live-streamed services has made our community accessible to all throughout the pandemic.
In recognition that this level of accessibility remains an important means of coming together for those who cannot do so in person, PSJC will continue to offer weekly live-streamed services for the foreseeable future. Additionally, many of our programs will continue on Zoom as well, so those who so choose can continue to participate from their homes.

If you have accessibility needs for the upcoming holidays and/or other PSJC services/programs, or recommendations to further the support inclusion and access within our community, please contact the PSJC office. Shanah Tova!

-Shelly Klainberg, Chair

Communications Committee Update

The work of the communications committee largely has focused on achieving the goals stated in the last Newsletter: “...to completely redo our website so that it is easier to use, more transparent, more attractive, and better reflects our community.” We believe that we have made huge strides in that direction, in our no-longer “temporary” site, now back at the WWW.psjc.org address. Please take a few minutes to check out some of the changes and additions. These include a history page and a video archive, where you can view last year’s Purimspiel as well as Dina Nadler-Serber’s latke and hammantashen wizardry! We also completely changed the tab structure to be more logical, removed much of the redundant and defunct material and rewrote and added content. This is a work in progress, constrained by the software that we use, but we believe we have made considerable progress!

We have also integrated a new calendar and events listing app into the website. This allows the user to click on a listed event and immediately see any Zoom or other links, rather than having to click multiple times. The calendar also allows users to search by category and to toggle between Agenda (the default — a listing), day, week and month views, and to print out those views. The Committee has also drafted a set of guidelines for the website format, use and structure.

We recently resurrected the “listserv” application, “PSJC Discuss” on the website. To join, go to the first “Home” tab, select “Groups” and then “PSJC Discuss.” You will need to sign in to your account in order to access the discussion.

The Committee also did a comprehensive review of the signage in the synagogue building, finding over 100 signs with widely varying format, decoration and content. The Committee has submitted a proposal for new more uniform and professional signage to the Board and is hopeful that it will be accomplished as we return to the building.

The Committee also has begun to work on a master calendar for holiday and event publicity so that we are able to advertise events in a timely fashion.

If you have feedback about ways to improve the website, signage, publicity or other communications issues, please email esschnur@pjsc.org. Likewise, if you would like to join our committee, please let us know!

-Elizabeth Schnur, Chair
Our beautiful building, in the end, is just a building. This year, as no other, we have proven that PSJC is our people... our community, finding ways to connect despite the challenges!

Thanks to Aileen for many of the photos on this page!