



SINAI TEMPLE

# **2019-20**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **2019-2020 Annual Report**

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# **Annual Report: President's Report**

**Submitted By: Jamie Berman, President**

After a long delay due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it gives me great joy to finally present this state of our synagogue with you.

First and most recently, we had the unprecedented outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, which greatly affected our operations. Our schools (SAA and Religious School) began on line teaching in a matter of days. Our students and teachers rose to the challenge of at home learning and I can honestly say they didn't miss a beat.

Mt Sinai Memorial Parks implemented new safer at home policies during COVID-19. Given the state of the world, for Mt. Sinai, it was business as usual. Mt. Sinai live streamed memorials and continued to provide the community with their invaluable service, care and compassion. Thank you to Howard Kaplan for managing the Parks through this pandemic.

While we made the difficult decision to close our facilities during the "stay at home" time period in accordance with state and local guidelines, our clergy continued to lead daily minyan and Shabbat services via You Tube and Zoom throughout this pandemic. We continued to offer programs and classes for all our members. The number of views on YouTube and Facebook demonstrates that our congregants and people around the country needed us and we are there for them.

Staff and lay leadership reached out to our most vulnerable congregants first to check in and ask if there was anything they needed. Staff and volunteers then reached out to all our members to check in and stay in touch. The response was overwhelming gratitude. Our clergy and staff worked overtime to insure that we continue to reach out and connect to you.

While the synagogue building is closed until we are safely allowed to congregate, we remain open to providing our congregants connections to our community and us.

About a year ago, I spoke to this congregation sharing my hopes and aspirations for the coming year. We have made great strides towards those goals I outlined a year ago, yet there is still much to do.

Back to the beginning.

My first priority was to heal and strengthen the relationship between the school and the synagogue. The formation of the Oversight Committee (OC) had been approved and is now performing many

of the approval functions that the synagogue board used to fulfill. This has streamlined the decision-making process. Thank you to Rebecca Kekst, Richard Weston, Lori Sideman and Mark Urman. These committee members serve the Sinai Akiba Academy board, Temple board and OC. Their commitment to build a closer bond between the school and temple is to be commended.

I am pleased to share that our school will now be led by Dr. Marc Lindner. He is immensely qualified and will be a great asset to both the school and synagogue. I welcome working with him and continuing on the path of healing together. Thank you to Betty Winn our interim HOS who had done a remarkable job of maintaining the highest level of academic excellence with SAA.

Our Religious School under the leadership of Danielle Kassin, continues to grow. We currently have an impressive 431 students currently enrolled in the program. During the Religious School at home learning, Danielle provided creative and fun programs to keep our students engaged. Car parades around the neighborhood, drive by Torah selfies and Facebook workouts were just a few of the many activities the students participated in.

Process is not exactly the most exciting topic of conversation, but it stands out as a major priority for this institution. With our Executive Director and COO Howard Lesner retiring next year, it is crucial that we have systems in place and shore up our written procedures. All contracted employees now have uniform contracts, all paper documents will be scanned to the cloud, legal advice is now consistent throughout the organization and all documentation for board members is now stored in our board portal.

Last but not least, development is critical to the future of our synagogue. I pledged to strengthen our development department and move towards a capital campaign. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the financial health of Sinai Temple. We will need to evaluate our development plans for the coming year but there is plenty on the horizon.

As promised, we are in the early stages of creating a legacy campaign and reaching out to members in the hopes that they will include Sinai Temple in their estate plans. If you or anyone you know has included Sinai Temple in their estate, please share with us so that we can include them in our program.

I am pleased to announce that the synagogue is in the very early stages of a renovation of our building first and second floor. With full support of the executive committee, we will be moving forward with a capital campaign and much needed redesign of our building's first and second floor. Of course, this effort is a long-term project and the state of the economy will affect when this project will be rolled out.

Every day I am blessed to be working with amazing staff and lay leadership. Their commitment to our shul is inspiring and to be commended. Thank you to the most amazing Executive Committee

for their guidance and support. I could not ask for a better team. Leon Biederman, Rob Strauss, Richard Weston, Michael Arnall, Anna Tenenblatt, Mehrzad Roshan, Daniel Delshad, Ira Friedman, Allen Kamrava, Rob Galperson, Marci Maniker, Eric Diamond, Rebecca Kekst and Angela Maddahi, you all are the most awesome team!

Thank you to our senior staff whom I have the privilege of working side by side. Rabbis Wolpe, Guzik, Sherman, Rotenberg, Cantor Feldman and Howard Lesner on behalf of the entire synagogue, we value and thank you.

Most of all, I thank all of you, our congregants and I am proud to serve our congregation as your President.



## **Annual Report: Administration**

**Submitted By: Leon Biederman, Vice President of Administration**

The Vice President of Administration oversees all activities related to the administration of Sinai Temple, the operations of all Sinai Temple grounds and properties owned by the synagogue, the art and décor of the grounds, training and development of new and current board members, the relationship with the Temple caterer, the administration of all public relations, advertising, print material, and other communications originated by Sinai Temple, the information technology infrastructure, the non-MSMP personnel policies, and Temple security.

**Committees:** The Administration portfolio committees include House & Grounds, Art & Décor, Board Development, Catering, Communications, Information Technology System, Personnel Policy, and Security.

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **House & Grounds Committee** is responsible for (i) overseeing the use and configuration of the Temple/School building, and (ii) capital improvements and repairs of the grounds.
2. **Facilities Committee** focuses on the use and maintenance of the non-Temple/School properties owned by Sinai Temple.
3. **Art & Décor Committee** is responsible for the art displayed around the Temple building.
4. **Board Development Committee** oversees the training and development of new and current board members, as well as the tools used by the board to manage information exchange.
5. **Catering Committee** oversees relationships between caterers, clients, and Sinai Temple.
6. **Communications Committee** administers all public relations, advertising, print material, and other communications originated by Sinai Temple.
7. **Information Technology System Committee** has oversight responsibilities concerning the role of technology in supporting the mission of Sinai Temple and its schools.
8. **Personnel Policy Committee** supervises all non-Mount Sinai Memorial Parks and Mortuaries employee relations, except Sinai Akiba teachers. In consultation with the Executive Director/COO, the committee participates in preparing job descriptions, establishing performance criteria, conducting performance reviews and making recommendations regarding the terms and conditions of employment, as well as evaluating the employee termination process.
9. **Security Committee** oversees the physical security of non-Mount Sinai Memorial Parks and Mortuaries facilities.

**Committee members include:**

**House & Grounds Committee**

**Chair:** Frank Pournazarian

**Members:** Jackie Ahdout, Leon Biederman, Joseph Gabbaian, Cary Lerman, Howard Lerner, David Matloob, Michael Nazarian

**Facilities Committee**

**Chair:** Leon Biederman

**Members:** Michael Arnall, Leon Biederman, Tom Flesh, Joseph Gabbaian, Kam Hekmat, Allen Kamrava, Cary Lerman, Sam Parsi, Eric Swanson

**Art & Décor Committee**

**Chair:** Paul Herman

**Members:** Sandy Croll, Bart Kogan, Marilyn Stern

**Board Development Committee**

**Chair:** Marci Maniker

**Members:** Jamie Berman, Leon Biederman, Linda Camras, Raquel Harris, Kerry Miller, Cindy Paikal, Janet Rosenblum, Jimmy Taus

**Catering Committee**

**Chair:** TBD

**Members:** Jamie Berman, Leon Biederman, Rachell Marcus, Howard Lerner, Lina Pournazarian

**Communications Committee**

**Chair:** Lisa Pompan

**Members:** Jamie Berman, Robert Galperson, Rachel-Ann Levy, Sharona R. Nazarian, Cindy Paikal, Emily Shefer, Rebecca Houriani, Ana Marvisi, Monica Brik, Anna Fogelman

**Information Technology System Committee**

**Chair:** Eric Mamos

**Members:** Leon Biederman, Daniel Delshad, Allen Kamrava, Rachel-Ann Levy, DJ Simhaee, Jessica Wacht

**Personnel Policy Committee**

**Chair:** Linda Camras and Frank Melton

**Members:** Jamie Berman, Leon Biederman, Shirley Bilfield, Michael Bordy, Ira Friedman, Tom Lane, Howard Lesner, David Matloob, Peter Rothholz, Kurt Smalberg

**Security Committee**

**Chair:** Leon Biederman

**Members:** Jamie Berman, Howard Lesner, Ilan Shapiro

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

The House & Grounds Committee's focus for this fiscal year is the deferred maintenance and the maintenance request process. The challenges with deferred maintenance have to do with prioritizing and budgeting those items that must be completed. This must be done within the budgetary constraints and the plans to remodel the Temple grounds.

The Facilities Committee's focus during the first six months of this fiscal year had to do with the future of the Beverly Glen property owned by Sinai Temple. The decision adopted before the end of 2019 was to put the property up for sale. The goal during the remaining of the fiscal year will be to develop a plan to manage the Ashton property owned by Sinai Temple professionally.

The Art & Décor Committee supervised the installation and exhibition of artworks in Merage Gallery by Eyal Sherman z"l (Rabbi Erez Sherman's late brother), Anna August (Sinai Akiba art instructor), and Sinai Akiba students. It also provided counsel and reference to Sinai Temple's leadership and staff in matters of the building's appearance. Early in the coming months, the committee will be exhibiting the works of Religious School students and photographs of the lives and times of B'nei Menashe, a group of Indian/Israeli Jews.

The Board Development Committee conducted the Board Orientation for new Board members, organized the Board Retreat to re-energize the Board members and unify the Board, and formalized Mentor relationships for new Board members with more tenured members. The plans for the next few months include: reintroduce the "Getting to Know You" coffee/meetings, review and update the handouts for the New Board Member Orientation to include SAA orientation information, and update the committee information. Reorganize the Orientation so that less time is devoted to the Parks and more time to the long-range plan. Facilitate another Board Retreat that focuses on the Long-Range Plan.

During the first part of the year, the goal of the Catering Committee was to renew the catering contract. Once that happened, the next phase will be to meet periodically with Errol Fine from Pat's to review the progress being made to increase the number of events at Sinai Temple.

During the past few months, the Personnel Policy Committee has focused its attention on the development of various Human Resources forms and the updating of the Sinai Temple Employee Handbook. The focus of the Committee for the future will be to create standards for employee salaries and revise the benefits Sinai Temple employees receive.

Under the guidance and direction of Sinai Temple staff Rachel-Ann Levy and Emily Shefer, the Communications Committee continues to support and provide feedback on new communication endeavors, as well as the strengthening of longstanding ones. With the help of the committee, Sinai Temple launched a new marketing brochure in January 2020, along with the "phase two" build-out



of cybermitzvah.org and the launch of the second annual “Annual Report” in summer 2019. Moving forward, the Committee looks forward to supporting staff in the refresh of the Sinai Temple website in 2021, the assessment of online registration/giving platforms and the deeper focus on social media outlets and blogs.

The focus of the Security Committee during the past eight months has been the upgrade of the security emergency system. The system has now been acquired, and it will be installed in the near future. This new system will provide a significant improvement in which Temple members, administrators, other employees, and clergy, as well as SAA parents, teachers, and administrators, are notified in case of an emergency.



# **Annual Report: Development**

**Submitted By: Robert Strauss, Vice President of Development**

The Vice President of Development oversees the Development Committee, the Gala Committee, and all fundraising efforts and initiatives at the Temple, including the Annual Appeal. In collaboration with committee members and staff, the VP of Development sets the goals and vision for the year's fundraising.

**Committees:** Development, Gala, other fundraising committees as needed

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **Development Committee** is charged with leading Temple-wide fundraising efforts, including the Annual Appeal and the Gala.
2. **Gala Committee** works to plan the annual event honoring a member of our community. The Gala, along with the Annual Appeal, is an integral part of our annual fundraising efforts.

**Committee members include:**

## **Development Committee**

**Chair:** Lisa Pompan

**Members:** Jackie Ahdout, Jamie Berman, Tom Flesh, Rob Galperson, Ellie Pourbaba, Laura Reader, Rob Strauss, Jimmy Taus

## **Gala Committee:**

**Co-Chairs:** Sari Arnall, Michael Arnall, Jimmy Delshad, Lonnie Delshad, Judy Flesh, Tom Flesh, Ellie Pourbaba, Fred Pourbaba

**Members:** Adele Abramson, Jamie Berman, Linda Camras, Caroline Delshad, Daniel Delshad, Debra Delshad, Jennifer Galperson, Rob Galperson, Faith Gershbock, Jacob Gershbock, Elisa Koss, Sheila Leibovic, Aaron Leibovic, Michal Lesner, Angela Maddahi, Rachelle Marcus, Alice Marks, Michael Nazarian, Lisa Pompan, Janet Rosenblum, Rob Strauss

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

The 2019 Annual Appeal took place once again on Yom Kippur. The Appeal successfully hit and exceeded its budgeted goal. This year's appeal also saw more unique donors than the previous three years. Another initiative taken on was to engage donors in more creative and frequent ways than in previous years. This year we held a donor thank you parlor, small dinners with clergy, and

thanked our donors with student made Hanukkah cards. Though the June Gala had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis, we still have a large number of dedicated donors who remain committed for the event in support of Howard Lesner.

**Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

This year the biggest challenge has been the postponement of the Gala due to the pandemic. The Gala is one of our major fundraisers, and the annual budget depends on moneys raised at the event. We are overcoming this challenge because of the dedication of our donors to remain committed to their pledges for the event. Though we do not know when we will be able to gather together for the event, we know that the Sinai Temple community continues to support the initiative. In this COVID time, fundraising will continue to be challenging and we must approach it in new and creative ways, starting with the Annual Appeal.

**Metrics:**

This year's Annual Appeal raised \$1,321,722.98 from a total of unique 621 donors.

**Goals:**

The Development Committee is working to strengthen and expand Sinai Temple's fundraising efforts. We look forward to expanding the work of our dedicated Development staff members and finding new ways to engage donors. One of the initiatives we will be working to establish over the next year is a strong atmosphere of planned giving within our community. We will also look to continue our efforts of donor engagement throughout the year.



## **Annual Report: Education**

**Submitted By: Richard Weston, Vice President of Education**

Over the years I have had the privilege of chairing and participating in a number of Sinai Temple Committees. However, without detracting from the important work of each of those committees, I must admit that none of my prior experiences have been as fulfilling as my current position as Vice President of Education. Two of my three daughters were graduated from Sinai Akiba Academy, and my oldest daughter attended Sinai Temple's Religious School for eight years. Witnessing firsthand my three daughters' education at Sinai instilled in me a deep appreciation for Jewish education and the extraordinary job being done daily by the Sinai Temple schools. My portfolio includes the Sinai Temple Religious School and Sinai Akiba Academy, as well as Beit Bracha, Sinai's unique program to enable every child with special needs or learning differences to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and a Jewish education.

Thinking about the role of Jewish education brought to mind three quotes which I believe perfectly sum up my feelings about Jewish education and our educational programs:

- "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn." –Benjamin Franklin
- "To defend a country, you need an army. But to defend an identity, you need a school. Judaism is the religion of the book, not the sword." –Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
- "The real guardians of a state are the teachers." –Talmud Yerushalmi, Hagigah 1:7

In summary, the past year of overseeing Sinai Temple's schools and efforts at educating our children has truly been a privilege. It has brought me closer to the administrators, teachers and lay leaders of our schools, the unsung heroes and guardians of your most precious possessions – your children.



## **Annual Report: Beit Bracha**

**Submitted By: Rabbi Nicole Guzik**

**Mission of Beit Bracha:** Beit Bracha enables a child with special needs or learning differences to have a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Jewish education at Sinai Temple. Beit Bracha strives to embrace families with children with special needs and learning differences into the greater Sinai Temple community.

### **Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

An increased enrollment of 14 students. Our best method of enrollment is word of mouth from current Beit Bracha students. It is a significant sign of success when current Beit Bracha parents encourage other Jewish students in the community to seek out and join our program.

One of the Beit Bracha parents initiated a Sunday meet n' greet with other Beit Bracha parents. She wanted to increase community opportunities for these parents. The session included a conversation with a representative from Camp Ramah's Amitzim program and mostly focused on schmoozing over coffee and bagels. It was beautiful watching this mom take the reigns and create a mini-community of Beit Bracha parents within our religious school.

The greatest accomplishment is watching Beit Bracha continuing through the pandemic. Shadows are going above and beyond, connecting with their students, and teaching them through on-line learning. Some of the teaching is independent and some is as a support through zoom classes. We are holding a Beit Bracha parent community night via zoom and will continue to be a support to these parents and children through the pandemic.

### **Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

The greatest challenge is right now, justifying our program to funders through the pandemic. Special education is heartbreaking. Learning therapists of all kind are doing their best to teach those students that need the most help. However, online education just is not the best tool for many of our students. We are adapting hour lessons to 15-20-minute increments. We are adjusting lessons to determine whether our students will focus more with music, movement, or interactive lessons.

We do not have an active committee. When the synagogue moves forward, this will be an important conversation. Fundraising for this program will need to be an essential discussion. We are currently working to justify our funding to current donors.

### **Unique Signs of Success for Beit Bracha:**

Successful program delivery is retention of our students from kindergarten (or whenever they enter Beit Bracha) through Chai School (8th-12th grade). Retention indicates the program is providing supportive, resourceful shadows. Retention indicates the program is providing a positive experience. Retention indicates that parents seek out a bar or bat mitzvah journey throughout the duration of religious school. We have retained every single one of our students.

Successful program delivery is the continued recruitment of new students. We continue to grow each year of this program. With Beit Bracha's positive reputation and continued growth, even families within the synagogue community that would otherwise "hide" their child's disabilities are coming forward, understanding the benefit in seeking learning help. Just two weeks ago, a student was recruited through another family because of Beit Bracha's positive reputation. The student lives in West Los Angeles and the parents heard about Beit Bracha's flexibility with financial situations and fully mainstreamed approach. Most families do not want to join a religious school with only four more months until the end of the school year. However, the family was excited about the accessibility to a Jewish journey for their son.

Successful program delivery is watching each child grow in their Judaism in a unique, positive way. One of our students (a child with Down Syndrome) used to walk into Sinai Temple, like a stranger following his grandparents. Now, before religious school starts, he runs towards the kippah "box", puts a kippah on his head and sits in our chapel with a huge grin on his face. Sinai is clearly his synagogue, not merely a place he would visit with his grandparents. Another child (on the Autism spectrum) decided to raise money for Beit Bracha so he could help children like himself gain a Jewish education. If the child is not having a positive experience, we work harder to find a more positive path.

Successful program delivery is watching the family of the child become immersed within synagogue life. If a family wants to attend the synagogue Shabbaton, Beit Bracha enables the child to sleep in the bunks, supported by a shadow. If the family wants to attend Shabbat or holiday services, at Sinai Temple or elsewhere, Beit Bracha will help the child feel supported in the experience. If the child wants to attend summer camp, we help connect the child to the appropriate camping experience.

### **Additional Information for Sinai Temple:**

This is a Dvar Torah by one of our Beit Bracha students, Blair. Blair is on the autism spectrum. She was able to articulate her thoughts to the rabbi and the rabbi wrote out her speech. Blair delivered her Dvar Torah before the Sinai Temple community. Blair continued in our religious school and will continue with our Chai School program.

*Shabbat Shalom. My name is Blair and I am so excited that today, is my bat mitzvah. I am studying the Torah portion of Yitro. Yitro is Moses' father in law. He explains to Moses that when you are a leader, you cannot lead a group of people on your own. You need to have a*

*support system in order to make thoughtful decisions and know where to turn when you need help.*

*In preparing for my bat mitzvah, I thought about my own support system and who I turn to when I need help. My teachers help me by teaching me the alphabet, how to read and all of my numbers. They are kind and loving. Mr. Cohen helped me to say the blessing over my tallit. He helped me to learn my Torah blessings and even read from the Torah. My Nana helps me because she reads with me. We share food together and she takes me to dinner and Broadway shows. And most of all, my parents help me. We spend time together, reading and watching Dancing with the Stars. Jr.*

*Having a bat mitzvah is a very special moment in my life. Sinai Temple is my second home and I love coming here. My mom and dad are proud that I have learned Hebrew and I know I will pass my traditions to my family. I am so happy that I am celebrating with all of you, my friends and family.*

*Judaism is so important to me. I love singing prayers at Hebrew School, dancing during the Barchu, eating apples and honey on Rosh Hashana, seeing Lucy at Hebrew school, being with my family at Shabbat dinner and knowing that I am growing my Jewish character. Yitro reminded Moses that you have to be on a team. You can't live alone. Judaism is my team. A friend at school might be a teammate. A parent or rabbi or Mr. Cohen or Danielle Kassin is a teammate. And I know I am a great teammate. I am wonderful because I am kind. I am loving, smart, helpful to everyone. I make brownies for people who are sick with our Spoonful of Hesed group at Sinai Temple. I am respectful even though I am a teenager.*

*I stand before you as a bat mitzvah: someone who loves being Jewish, loves being at Sinai Temple and like Moses and Yitro, I will be a great leader because I understand what it means to be on a team. Shabbat Shalom*



# **Annual Report: Sinai Akiba Academy**

**Submitted By: Betty Winn, SAA Interim Head of School and Rebecca Kekst, SAA Board Chair**

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

## **Hiring of new Head of School**

Over the last year, Sinai Akiba Academy embarked on a successful nationwide search for a new Head of School. Working with a national educational search firm, our goal was to attract a dynamic and highly qualified Head of School to lead us into the next decade.

The successful search led to the School Board's recent announcement that Dr. Marc Lindner will become Sinai Akiba Academy's next Head of School, effective July 15, 2020.

The unanimous decision of the Board and the Sinai Temple Oversight Committee to appoint Dr. Lindner was supported by the enthusiastic recommendation of the SAA Search Committee, as well as an overwhelmingly positive response from our school community during Dr. Lindner's visit in January.

Dr. Lindner brings to Sinai many years of experience working as an educator and school leader, most recently at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland, where he currently serves as High School Principal and Associate Head of School, a position he has held since 2016. Prior to that role, Dr. Lindner served as the Middle School Director and Assistant Head of School at Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School in Northridge. Dr. Lindner holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. Social Psychology from the University of Maine and has taught math, English, history and psychology.

Our most sincere appreciation goes out to search committee members Sari Arnall, Samantha Auerbach '97, Rabbi Nicole Guzik, Cary Lerman, Angela Maddahi, Sharon Meron, Sam Parsi, Anna Tenenblatt, and Betty Winn. The committee represented well the entire SAA community, with their tremendous dedication and countless hours devoted to successfully filling this most important role.

## **Admissions**

Sinai Akiba's enrollment for the 2019-20 year surpassed our projections and we opened the school year with 584 students enrolled, 7 students over the budget goal. While it is quite common for school enrollment to dip during times of transition, our enrollment defied the norm, and we believe that is testimony to the high regard in which Sinai Akiba Academy is held.



The number of inquiries and applications for the Parenting Center, ECC and K-8 program surpassed historic numbers: we had 214 applicants in FY20 compared to 161 in FY19 and 172 in FY18. We doubled our Toddler enrollment in the Parenting Center, filled four classes of two- and three-year children, each with over 66 students per grade.

Sinai Akiba's K-8 program hit an eight-year historic benchmark enrolling 31 new students, eight of them in middle school. However, we were short six students from our goal in the ECC due to attrition to public Pre-K programs in the neighborhood.

In sum, 2019-2020 enrollment surpassed budget goals by 13 students in K-8 due to strong retention and new student recruitment strategies, aided by excellent lay leader partnership from Retention and Recruitment Committee Chairs Sari Arnall and Bitá Shalom, and our team of 50+ tour ambassadors and community builders.

On Friday, March 13, just as admission decisions for new enrollees were released, State and local governments mandated Safer at Home restrictions due to COVID-19. Sinai Akiba Academy administrators and faculty did not miss a beat and moved quickly to distribute all necessary materials and technology to every K-5 family and transitioned to online learning by Monday, March 16.

All independent schools are facing uncharted waters preparing for many unknowns at this time. Sinai Akiba Academy's administration and SAA Committee will continue to pivot with steadfast commitment to ensure the future sustainability of our School, while maintaining the high learning standards that have been its hallmark.

### **Development/Fundraising**

This was an exceptional year in SAA overall philanthropy. By the end of April, we had already surpassed last year's total dollars by 11%. To date, we have raised \$945,000 in combined fundraising of the Sinai Akiba Fund, Annual Event and Major Gifts, along with miscellaneous donations.

Our fundraising efforts began with the launch of our Sinai Akiba Fund in October, gaining momentum through #GivingTuesday on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. As of today, \$350,000 has been raised for the Sinai Akiba Fund.

The 2020 Annual Event was held on January 18th, and Sinai Akiba Academy's community came out in full force to celebrate the outstanding contributions of community leaders Rebecca and David Kekst, Shelley Lawrence, and Anna and Bill Tenenblatt. The sold-out evening, with over 500 people in attendance in Barad Hall, was literally glowing with the collective voices of our community and the Havdalah candles that were lit throughout the ballroom.

Each honoree was recognized for their unique contribution and incredible service to our community. Their commitment to Sinai Akiba Academy, its students, and community will continue to be felt for generations to come.

Special guest, Sinai Akiba Alumna, Ayla Kattler '19, who currently attends Milken Community Schools delighted the crowd by articulating the outstanding student experience she had at Sinai Akiba. Betty Winn, Interim Head of School, shared the importance of supporting the tuition assistance program and asked each person in the room to stand up and say "Hineni," (Here I am) to show their support for the program.

Almost \$500,000 was raised during the evening, including approximately \$65,000 for Sinai Akiba's tuition assistance program. Thanks to the generous support of our donors, these dollars will directly support SAA students and help to continue our more than 50-year history of excellence in Jewish education.

In addition to our annual Sinai Akiba Fund appeal and Annual Event, the school's growing endowment received \$1.2 million from Anna and Bill Tenenblatt's extraordinary pledge of \$5 million and Mt. Sinai Memorial Park's pledge of \$2 million.

Despite the challenge of fundraising for the Annual Event and the Sinai Akiba Fund taking place in the same five month period, we were extremely fortunate to have raised the majority of dollars prior to the quarantine. However, we were not able to execute our 4th quarter fundraising plans due to COVID-19.

### **A few words about our Interim Head of School**

This report would not be complete without expressing our thanks to Betty Winn, our Interim Head of School, for her steadfast leadership and guidance throughout the entire 2019-20 year.

Betty came to Sinai Akiba with vast educational experience both in Jewish schools as well as secular private and public schools, and experience serving on many independent school boards and other non-profit boards. She was the perfect choice to lead our school during this year of transition and we are grateful for her commitment to SAA.

Betty's extraordinary leadership has guided Sinai Akiba through one of our most difficult times - the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic - allowing the administration and faculty to swiftly transition the school to an online learning community within just a few days.

## **Response to COVID-19**

Due to the unprecedented public health crisis caused by COVID-19, at its onset Sinai Akiba Academy moved to a fully online learning program for the remainder of the 2019-2020 School year. The decision to take this action was guided by the recommendations of our local, state and national governments and health authorities.

Transitioning to a fully online learning program in just a few days showcased the resilience and adaptability of our faculty and administration, as well as their commitment to the success of our students and school. Of course there were and continue to be challenges. However, we are listening to feedback from the Sinai Akiba community and continuing to adapt and advance the program as the days and weeks continue.

After moving to an online learning environment, we continued to create a wealth of virtual community experiences for our families to remain connected, including Community Havdalah, Community Support and Wellness initiatives, and a lifecycle recognition program.

In an effort to partner with our parents, accommodations have been made in the business office regarding tuition and payments. We have also created a COVID-19 Tuition Support Fund to help families needing assistance to remain part of the SAA community.

## **Goals for the coming year and beyond**

Our plans for the coming school year are obviously challenged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Original budget projections which were done last December included a budget increase of 2 percent, which was our lowest increase in years. Enrollment projections were strong, and we were extremely optimistic about the year ahead. As we write this report our world has changed dramatically and, while we remain optimistic about the future, we don't know the full impact of the current situation on our families and how enrollment may or may not be impacted in the months ahead. We are currently on Stay at Home orders from the government, which makes planning for the summer and fall very difficult. We are reviewing all of our budgets and are working on various projections which will be finalized as our enrollment becomes clearer.

What we do know is that the Sinai Akiba community is resilient and committed to our School and we will succeed in working through the challenges of the moment. We are determined to support the education of our students and the needs of our families, to keep our community intact and thriving during this extremely challenging time in our history.



# **Annual Report: Sinai Temple Religious School**

**Submitted By: Danielle Kassin, Religious School Principal, Talia Pouratian, Religious School Committee Chair, and Tessa Lydic, Religious School Office Manager**

**Committees:** Religious School, Reshet

## **The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. The aim of the **Religious School Committee** is to help build a community between disparate families at the religious school by planning and creating events to bring people together. There is a larger committee that works on building relationships between Ashkenazi and Persian families with of the goal of creating an inclusive, respectful and caring community. Also, the committee serves as an ear from the community to the religious school to get feedback from families about their experience throughout the year.
2. There is also a larger committee under the umbrella of the Religious School called the **Reshet Committee** that specifically works on building relationships between Ashkenazi and Persian families. The goal of the Reshet Committee is to create an inclusive, respectful, and caring community. New strategies discussed in the Reshet Committee meetings are implemented directly into the Religious School program to create a more open and comfortable environment for all children and families. This year we focused on the theme “Stronger Together” where students are reminded that even though we may come from different backgrounds we all share the same core Jewish values and that makes us stronger as a community.

## **Committee members include:**

### **Religious School Committee**

**Chair:** Talia Pouratian

**Members:** Carolyn Arshadnia, Tanaz Banooni, Rachelle Marcus, Danielle Kassin, Rabbi Rotenberg and Tessa Lydic

## **Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

We are very pleased that we were awarded a \$42,000 grant this year through the Legacy Heritage Program. The grant, entitled, “Better Together,” connects elderly people with our youth through specific programs implemented to connect the two groups. The program brings these two groups together to share stories and culminates with a final project. This intergenerational grant not only helps to give elderly more purpose, but also encourages children to integrate with a group that they

are less familiar with, ultimately creating a more empathetic community. We are working on creative ways, even if virtual, to continue the program during the pandemic.

Extracurricular options have greatly increased this year. For example, we designed a social action project through a program called “Mitzvah Moms,” where the 6th graders had opportunities to participate in visiting and working at Midnight Mission, preparing food at Sinai for the homeless, and other projects. Another extracurricular opportunity that was offered to our students was to bake and create cards that were sent to Church of the Good Shepard.

We created a new system for learning support. This is both for children who need additional and individualized support and others who need more of a challenge. This new system allowed us to add additional Hebrew Specialists, who were in touch with our teaching staff in order to determine those students who needed additional support or challenge. These Hebrew Specialists identified specific students to work with them. Rabbi Rotenberg worked with advanced readers in a specialized group. We divided the 4<sup>th</sup> graders into a variety of groups, allowing the more advanced students an opportunity to be challenged in a different way.

In addition to the learning support system, we also created a variety of other programs that support student learning. For example, we introduced “Wrap & Snap” with the Clergy. The clergy worked with students and taught them how to wrap tefillin, and then snapped a picture for social Media. We also introduced a new health initiative and offered fruit and sushi as part of our Wednesday Pizza Sale. This healthy direction was inspired by ‘Shomer Goof ‘– and teaching our kids the Jewish Value of respecting the Body. This value was also applied in our mediation and sound bath programs provided to our parents.

### **Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

Pivoting the school from live/in person classes to a virtual experience due to COVID-19 has been a very challenging experience for the school, teachers, families and students alike. We overcame this challenge on many fronts. We provided extensive training on Zoom use to all of our Staff. We moved tutoring online and offered 100+ tutoring spots a week to our students. We converted all our programming online (prayer services, shabbat services, classes, etc). In addition, we added additional services such as Lag B Omer, Yom Yerushalyim, Shavout, Friday Shabbat Services, etc. To encourage community and connectedness we started weekly Car Parades, reaching nearly 130+ houses on our various routes. Our teachers sent out cards and made phone calls to students/families in their class to offer additional support and guidance. We hosted our first ever Torah Drive by. We created numerous videos for a variety of events; developed and offered Sunday Summer Services; and we are continuing our summer tutoring program.

Another challenge we faced was attendance and engagement. Our teachers and staff had to think creatively to effectively maximize our new online learning platform. Our ending ceremony was

based around the rainbow, where each class represented a color of the rainbow and wore that color to class. We discussed the significance of coming together as one to bring light. The symbolism was beautiful, and our students were incredibly engaged. We saw nearly 90% of our 7<sup>th</sup> Grade families attend the Siyum. We noticed that attendance at all our grade-specific Friday Night Services were attended by a majority of the grade, their families and often grandparents too!

The STRS committee is running very smoothly and effectively. An opportunity for improvement throughout the school is continuing to get more parents involved. We would like more volunteers for more initiatives to augment and provide support for our many programs. We are adding 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grade parent partners/room parents for next year, so that the older students and families continue to stay invested and connected. We will increase the variety of committees from 14 to 19 next year, to allow more options for parents to get involved.

### **Metrics:**

Student enrollment has increased by 10 percent this year. We have a total of 431 students enrolled this year.

We have brought 36 new families to Sinai this year.

Our event attendance have increased steadily this year. An example of a few programs are the Tashlich on the Beach (150 family members), Religious School Shabbaton (250 family members), Sleepover at Sinai (150 children) and Children's Retreat at JCA Shalom (150 children)

The Purim Carnival and Basketball Camp are two revenue and community building programs the Religious School is very proud of.

### **Goals:**

Our main goal is to have more parental engagement and more community involvement. We would like to see more parents interested in becoming active volunteers, to enhance not only their children's experience but also as a way to demonstrate to their family their commitment to Sinai, their love for Judaism and learning. Within this initiative, we want to continue to work on inclusivity between Ashkenazi, Persian and other groups. We want to ensure our families are stronger together with the emphasis on the idea that we are celebrating shared Jewish values. We have a committee that meets once every two months to come up with ideas to increase family engagement and open the lines of communication for the teachers, parents, and students, which will continue to meet next year and in the years to come. We also want to see the children and families getting together outside of school events. At the end of each school year, our teachers suggest playdate matches. These matches are based on increasing community and encouraging

social inclusivity within our community. We then take these suggested matches and encourage the families to get together over the summer to continuing building community.

During the pandemic we are still continuously looking for ways to bring the community together on a virtual level. Our Summer goal remains the same - to connect with families virtually. We hope to accomplish this by offering free Summer tutoring, continued Car Parades, Sunday services, reaching out to perspective parents, working with families on financial aid in order to retain our students, creating grade specific summer videos, and an incentive program (sushi & pizza) for our students. Lastly, we are diligently working on a virtual summer camp at the end of June.



## **Annual Report: Finance**

**Submitted By: Michael Arnall, Vice President of Finance**

The Vice President for Finance of Sinai Temple oversees all of Sinai Temple's financial matters, the work of the Controller, and the Finance Department.

**Portfolio/Committees:** The Finance portfolio includes oversight of the Audit, Budget, Insurance, and Investment Committees.

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **Audit Committee** oversees the formal examination and analytical review of the financial accounts of the Synagogue, and its affiliates, by an external independent certified public accounting firm.
2. **Budget Committee** oversees all non-cemetery financial operations. The lay leadership have worked tirelessly to create more accountability and fiscal responsibility within those departments.
3. **Insurance Committee** oversees all insurance coverage matters for the Temple.
4. **Investment Committee** oversees all non-cemetery investments. These oversight responsibilities include the selection of professional advisors, the determination of appropriate types of investments, and the allocation of assets between appropriate investment types.

**Committee members include:**

**Audit Committee**

**Chair:** Kam Hekmat

**Members:** Keyvan Abselet, David Amsterdam, Leon Biederman, Eric Diamond, Tom Flesh, Joseph Gabbaian, Abner Goldstine, Allen Kamrava, Rebecca Kekst, Angela Maddahi, Frank Navi, Shervin Rashti, Kurt Smalberg. Jamie Berman, President. Clergy/Employee: Howard Kaplan, Howard Lesner, Kay Maurren, and Mike Bridge.

**Budget Committee**

**Chair:** Allen Kamrava

**Members:** Judy Fisher, Tom Flesh, Joseph Gabbaian, Rob Galperson, Kam Hekmat, Rebecca Kekst, M Milo Mandel, Sharona Nazarian, Frank Pournazarian, Jina Rezvanpour, Mehrzad Roshan, Michael Silberstein, Anna Tenenblatt and Richard Weston. Jamie Berman, President. Clergy/Staff: Howard Lesner and Kay Maurren.



### **Insurance Committee**

**Chair:** Robert Moktarzadeh

**Members:** Jeff Berkett, Eric Diamond, Kam Hekmat, Cary Lerman, Frank Pournazarian and Kurt Smalberg. Jamie Berman, President. Clergy/Staff: Howard Kaplan, Howard Lesner, Kay Maurren and Jessica Wacht.

### **Investment Committee**

**Chair:** Howard Brandes

**Members:** David Amsterdam, Michael Arnall, Leon Biederman, Daniel Brown, Danny Delshad, Rebeka Kekst, Roxanna Maddahi, M Milo Mandel, Amos Meron, Jamie Resin, Hezy Shalev, Anna Tenenblatt. Jamie Berman, President. Clergy/Staff: Howard Lesner and Jessica Wacht

### **Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

**Retirement of debt related to the acquisition of property(ies) on Beverly Glen and Ashton.** In 2006 and 2008, Sinai Temple acquired parcels utilizing a portion of the organization's credit facility. The facility was paid in full in January 2020. This is directly in line with the organization's Long-Range Plan. Our expectation is that due to the cyclical nature of our business(es), the facility will be accessed on a need basis in order to bridge funding for our programs and our school.

**Establishment of SAA-Specific Bank Accounts.** The Finance Department at Sinai Temple opened 3 new accounts in order to facilitate better reporting of school revenues; specifically, for tuition, donations, and endowment deposits. The Finance Department has started the process of creating a roadmap for more prudent reporting practices.

**New Credit Card Account with Better Expense Reporting.** Sinai Temple obtained a credit card that does not require a personal guaranty and provides the organization with a monthly cash rebate toward expenditures. Staff members are also required to submit their expenses for approval by their supervisors.

**Implementation of AccuFund and Paychex FlexTime.** The Finance Department implemented a new accounting system, shifting from Financial Edge. The move should provide a vast array of reporting and easier collaboration among various departments. We also upgraded our timeclock system with badge number and fingerprint scan technology for more accurate clock-in reporting.

### **Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

Since the beginning of the year, the focus has been on changing some of the archaic practices; specifically, related to ad hoc reporting and communication. The staff continues to shift the paradigm, adhering to better accountability and more collaboration between departments. With the help of better technology and stronger cooperation between all team members, the Finance Department is executing on the primary goal of becoming a more cohesive and effective group.

**Metrics:**

Information from the most recent Audited Financials is available upon request.

**Goals:**

Better ProForma Budget Compilation; More fiscal responsibility within departments; More collaboration among team members; Adherence to policies and procedures



# **Annual Report: Programming and Social Action**

**Submitted By: Anna Tenenblatt, Vice President of Programs and Social Action**

The Vice President of Programs and Social Action oversees Social Action and Programming at Sinai Temple, this includes Temple programming, Scholar in Residence, Atid and Youth Dept.

**Committees:** The Programming and Social Action portfolio committees include Social Action, Music, and Program.

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **Social Action Committee** is responsible for coordinating and implementing temple-wide social action events.
2. **Music Committee** is responsible for working with the Cantor regarding the music program and ideas for enhancing the program.
3. **Program Committee** oversees programming for the Temple.

**Committee members include:**

## **Social Action Committee**

**Chair:** Cindy Paikal

**Members:** Niki Cohan, Michelle Taus, Marilyn Stern, Ariela Weston, Laura Reader, Deborah Brandes, Talia Poration, Leslie Migdal, Rabbi Andy Feig, and Rabbi Sam Rotenberg.

## **Music Committee**

**Chair:** Jane Z. Cohen

**Members:** Richard Greenberg, Linda Camras, Caroline Delijani, Judy Fischer, Tom Flesh, Harry Green, Rosa Berman Ruder, Cantor Marcus Feldman, and Aryell Cohen

## **Program Committee**

Currently, programming is being done by the programming team, Israel Center and Membership. Rebeka Small and her assistant Rachel Polansky have been organizing all of these events with volunteers, in coordination with Rabbis Guzik and Sherman, and myself.

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

This year, the Social Action committee concentrated on Packing with Purpose events for the various constituencies in the Temple and benefitting several worthwhile organizations.

Atid event Oct 11 for SPY; after shabbat services event Oct 26; SAA at Church of Good Shepard Oct 31, Nov 27 and March 10; Sisterhood for UCLA food closet Nov 5; BH Rotary Club Dec 2 for SPY;

Mens Club Dec 3 for Sova and during Planet Purim March 4, Temple Board meeting March 4 for Chai Lifeline.

The highlight for the Music committee is that participation has increased and people are very enthusiastic thanks to a great committee chair and committed members and volunteers.

One bright spot for the Program Committee this year was the Scholar-In-Residence with Matthew Levitt, Fromer-Wexler Fellow and Director of the Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at The Washington Institute, which was extremely successful. Many thanks to Rebeka and Rachel, Leslie Wachtel and, of course, to Roz and Abner Goldstine

**Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

The challenge for the Social Action committee is that we have a very small budget which is keeping the committee from expanding the range and variety of events.

The challenge for the Music committee is functioning within the larger temple community. Again, budget is very small and limits what can be accomplished.

One challenge has been that the Program budget has been reduced substantially over the last few years which has made running programs challenging. I have also discussed with Rebeka and the Rabbis the need to reinstate a lay committee for programming to provide ideas, insights and support to the team and we hope to accomplish this in the upcoming year.



# **Annual Report: Membership**

**Submitted By: Mehrzad Roshan, Vice President of Membership**

**Committees:** Membership, Ushering, Bimah

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **The Membership Committee** is charged with overseeing all Sinai Temple activities that directly impact our mission to recruit and retain members. The committee is in charge of implementing the recommendations for the membership component of the Long Range Plan. The committee also oversees the Ushering and Bimah committees.
  - a. **The Ushering Committee** finds volunteers every Shabbat to greet and welcome congregants.
2. **The Bimah Committee** invites lay leaders, new members and chairs of different committees to sit on the bimah so they can be introduced to the congregation.

**Committee members include:**

## **Membership Committee**

**Chairs:** Mehrzad Roshan, Rosa Berman Ruder and Robert Galperson

**Members:** Rabbi Erez Sherman, Rebeka Small; Membership and Programing director, Aliya Slepko, Membership Project Manager, and Rachel-Ann Levy, Director of Communication and Development form a steering committee and meet every 2 weeks. The committee meets once a month and rest of the committee members are: Jamie Berman (Temple President), Linda Camras, George Eshaghian, Tom Flesh, Anna Fogelman, Faith Gershbock, Carol and Richard Greenberg, Randi and Jerome Greenberg, Raquel Harris, Kerry Maller, Marci Maniker, Golda Mendelsohn, Lauren Miller, Frank Navi, Michael Nazarian, Sam Parsi, Talia Pouratian, Farideh Rafii, Peter Rothholz, Elvira Schwartz, Mitra Simanian, Sherry Weinman.

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

To create a warm and welcoming community, to foster deeper relationship among clergy and members, and to engage and retain our members, we have organized several events.

In March 2020, due to the Coronavirus pandemic and stay-at-home orders, many of our programs got canceled. We have been working to come up with new ideas and strategies to implement our goals.

1. We updated membership material for prospective members.

2. We conducted our annual temple wide survey in October 2019 with 447 or 26% responses. Each member of the Executive Committee and each department head were given detailed survey feedback regarding their portfolio for follow up.
3. Resignations survey was sent on February 2020 to all silent resigned members. We had 31 responses with feedback as to the reason for the resignations.
4. We held eight Breakfast with clergy for SAA parents.
5. We organized two community Shabbat dinners with musical programs.
6. We had Six Learning and Lunch on the Go, where clergy meet with members at their place of business. The latest one was via Zoom on April 21 with Rabbi Sherman and 23 of our members.
7. We sent out 96 college care packages.
8. We had several Shabbat Re-Imagined Havdalah programs: A reunion for Class of 2019, one for New Members and one for Empty Nesters. These programs took place at the home of Rabbis Sherman and Guzik. We also held a sukkot program for kindergarten class with over 100 attendees.
9. We started a new group called Empty Nesters group for members with children in college or graduate school. We organized 3 events for this group.
10. We started a series of cooking classes at our members' homes.
11. We started a new group for singles in their 40s and 50s.
12. Rabbi Sherman conducted a webinar for college students.
13. Prior to March 2020, under Cantor Feldman and Rabbi Rothenberg's leadership, students in the Meshorerim Choir led prayers and songs in Main Sanctuary on the first Shabbat of each month. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Shabbat of each month a group of students served as junior cantors and led part of the liturgy. Through Slice Shabbat, students led services for younger students on the 4<sup>th</sup> Shabbat of each month.
14. Cantor Feldman initiated a new outreach to B'nai Mitzvah families with meetings three months prior and three months after their B'nai Mitzvah to strengthen their connection to the synagogue.
15. The clergy have created a new life-cycle spreadsheet to better keep track of members who are ill and have a life cycle event.
16. In the beginning of the stay-at-home period, with Rebeka Small's leadership we made calls to members over age 65. Clergy will continue to reach out to this group on a regular basis.
17. Hesed project, about 95 temple members and 13 staff members made calls to the entire congregation. Special thanks and gratitude to Rebeka Small and Aliya Slepko for organizing this project.
18. Rabbi Sherman is teaching Introduction to Judaism to Jews by Choice students on a weekly basis which is continued via Zoom and he is in communication with these students via Zoom one on one in preparation for conversions and weddings as well.
19. Rabbi Guzik and Rebeka Small are spearheading a project to make mini care packages consists of challah rolls, grape juice and a few other things to be delivered to our members

who are doctors, nurses and pharmacists. Rabbi Rothenberg is working on amassing a group of volunteers to deliver the packages to their homes.

**Metrics:**

I am happy to say that we continued a positive trend to attract more members and to retain current members.

We have a total of 1706 dues paying membership units in the 2019-2020 fiscal year which is up by 31 units or 1.8%.

204 new membership units have joined Sinai temple this year compared to 150 in 2018-2019. Since we changed the dues structure for the age group of 36-39 with no children in our schools, we were able to gain 27 new membership units in this age category.

Our resignations were relatively flat, 181 this year compared to 179 in 2018-2019.

With the Coronavirus pandemics and stay-at-home orders, we have tried to reach out to our members with phone calls, classes thought by clergy, services and events online to keep our connection and we will continue to do so in the upcoming weeks. Connecting to our members has been the forefront of our mission during these difficult times.

We are very appreciative and proud of our staff and clergy for their tireless efforts to support the online communication and to reach out to members in a meaningful way.



# **Annual Report: Ritual**

**Submitted By Daniel Delshad, Vice President of Ritual**

The VP of Ritual oversees all of Sinai Temple's ritual matters.

**Committees:** The Ritual portfolio committees include Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Bikkur Holim, Ritual, Shiva, and Tahara

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Committee** is charged with setting dates for all upcoming B'nai Mitzvah. The committee also reviews B'nai Mitzvah eligibility forms and makes recommendations to the Cantor's office.
2. **Bikkur Holim Committee** reaches out to those Temple members who are ill and/or home-bound. The committee leads community outreach through visits, note writing, phone calls and food delivery.
3. **Ritual Committee** discusses proposals and recommendations pertaining to the rules, regulations and procedures for religious services and activities. On an annual basis and in partnership with the clergy, the committee reviews High Holy Day services and discusses recommendations relating thereto.
4. **Shiva Committee** supports Temple members (upon request) during their seven days of mourning. The Committee can help set up a home for shiva, and can provide prayer books, kippot and chairs. The group also ensures there are enough people to form a minyan for services.
5. **Tahara Committee** (formerly Chevra Kadisha) consists of a dedicated group of the congregation that work with the clergy and in cooperation with the mortuary to ritually prepare the body of the deceased for burial. The ritual preparation, Tahara, consists of ritual washing and dressing of the deceased in Tachrichim (shrouds), as well as placing the deceased in the Aron (casket). During Tahara, prayers and psalms are recited for compassion, salvation and guidance of the soul.

**Committee members include:**

**Bar/Bat Mitzvah Committee**

**Chair:** Ellie Pourbaba

**Members:** Elie Alyeshmerni, Alice Gold, David Matloob, Sharona Nazarian and Gail Rollman.  
**Clergy/Staff:** Sarah Buchanan, Aryell Cohen, Cantor Feldman, Rabbi Guzik, Danielle Kassin, Howard Lesner, Rabbi Sherman and Rabbi Wolpe. Jamie Berman, President



### **Bikkur Holim Committee**

**Chair:** Fran Stengel

**Members:** Linda Camras, Rosa Berman Ruder, Karen Fishel, Joseph Gabbaian, Roz Goldstine, Carole Greenberg, Judi Hoffman, Charlotte Kamenir, Elaine Lotwin, Rachelle Marcus, Diane Marder, David Matloob, Golda Mendelsohn, Edie Nitzberg, Lisa Pompan, Jina Rezvanpour, Mehrzad Roshan, Joe Ruder, Lori Silfen, Shirley Singer and Eleanor Weintraub. Jamie Berman, President. Clergy/Staff: Judy Begin, Rebecca Begin, Cantor Feldman, Rabbi Guzik, Howard Lesner, Ellen Pierson, Rabbi Sherman and Rabbi Wolpe.

### **Ritual Committee**

**Chair:** Elie Alyeshmerni

**Members:** Leon Biederman, Malcolm Cosgrove, George Eshaghian, Mansoor Eslamboly, Ira Friedman, Faith Gershbock, Abner Goldstine, Roz Goldstine, Carol Greenberg, Richard Greenberg, Mark Haloossim, Betty Hamburger, Paul Herman, Abe Knobel, Linda Knobel, Angela Maddahi, Rachelle Marcus, David Matloob, Golda Mendelsohn, Frank Navi, Michael Nazarian, Sharona Nazarian, Norman Pell, Lisa Pompan, Jina Rezvanpour, Brina Rosenbaum, Mehrzad Roshan, Peter Rothholz, Rosa Berman Ruder, Ricah Sabah, Lili Shafai, Michael Silberstein, Fran Stengel, Ebby Tabariai, Joel Weinstein. Jamie Berman, President. Clergy/Staff: Judy Begin, Aryell Cohen, Rabbi Feig, Cantor Feldman, Rabbi Guzik, Danielle Kassin, Howard Lesner, Rabbi Rotenberg, Rabbi Sherman and Rabbi Wolpe.

### **Shiva Committee**

**Chair:** Linda Knobel

**Members:** Marci Maniker. Jamie Berman, President.

### **Tahara Committee (formerly Chevra Kadisha)**

**Chairs:** Lisa Lainer

**Members: Women Committee:** Adele Abramson, Adriane Berman, Julie Pardo, Jina Rezvanpour, Roberta Rosenberg and Jennifer Trilling. **Men Committee:** Isaac Schmidt and Michael Silberstein. Clergy/Staff: Rabbi Guzik.

### **Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

Non-Kosher Torahs: The ritual committee identified 2 Sefer Torahs that were determined to be Non-Kosher Torahs, due to the deterioration of the actual scrolls and the writing on scrolls themselves. It was determined that it would cost too much to repair these Torahs. The Ritual Committee brought the motion to the Board of Directors to allow these scrolls to be buried in the Genizah according to Jewish Law or be allowed to be donated or loaned to another Jewish organization that could use these Torahs. This motion was approved by the Board. In conjunction

with the Rabbis we were able to effectively loan these 2 Torahs to another Jewish Community to use going forward.

Non-Jewish Spouse: We charged with reviewing the viability of allowing a Non-Jewish Spouse to become a member of the temple. After much discussion and deliberation, we brought the discussion to the Board of Directors to allow for proper discussion on the topic. After a long and constructive discussion, the Board voted to approve the motion that was discussed that will allow a Non-Jewish Spouse to become a temple member with certain restrictions. This motion was later passed to the Bylaws Committee where it resented to the Board for final approval of the new Bylaw language. This is now being voted by the full membership.

### **Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

High Holiday Honors/Torah Structure: It became evident this past year, that we needed to document all the processes of managing the overall High Holiday duties around Bimah honors, Torah reading, and other duties required to support the services. Unfortunately, this process was not documented and provided a large challenge this past year. We are going to work with the Ritual Committee to develop a documented process that can be given to any group to manage this process.

### **Goals:**

Shabbat Services Process: We need to continue to work to document the process of managing the Torah and Bimah process during Shabbat Services.

High Holidays Honors: We need to come up with a more robust process to manage the Honors during the High Holidays as many people do not show up for their Bimah sits and we need to have a secondary list made available onsite to allow the support people to select alternate members to sit on Bimah.

High Holiday Signage: Need to work on better signage to help congregants find their services and other areas at the Temple during the HHS.



# **Annual Report:**

## **General Counsel/Corporate Secretary**

**Submitted By: Ira M. Friedman, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary**

The role of General Counsel provides counseling and advice for the corporation, both Sinai Temple and Sinai Akiba Academy, and work with all outside lawyers representing the corporation or providing services to the corporation. The role of corporate secretary is to certify when actions are required of the Board of Directors.

**Committees:** Bylaws, Contracts, Legal

**Committee members include:**

### **Bylaws Committee**

**Chair:** Cary Lerman

**Members:** Jonathan Anschell, Shervin Behnam, Tom Flesh, Abner Goldstine, Kam Hekmat, David Kekst, M Milo Mandel, David Matloob, Jina Rezvanpour, Rob Strauss, Jimmy Taus, Pam Weisberg and Joel Weinstein.

### **Contracts Committee**

**Chair:** Ira M. Friedman

**Members:** David Ascher, Shervin Behnam, Michael Bordy, Linda Camras, Tom Flesh, Abner Goldstine, David Kekst, Cary Lerman, David Matloob, Sam Parsi, Julie Platt, Jina Rezvanpour, Saul Rostamian and Kurt Smalberg. Jamie Berman, President

### **Legal Committee**

**Chair:** Ira M. Friedman

**Members:** Shervin Behnam, M Milo Mandel, Jimmy Taus, Joel Weinstein

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

Our top achievements included working with outside labor attorney to have uniform contracts for those under contract consistent with ever changing legal landscape in labor area work with various departments in reviewing and/or revising contract with third parties or vendors.

We also worked to resolve various issues regarding matters where disputes existed.

## **Goals**

Our main goal is to continue to be available to provide timely advice to Sinai and SAA in various areas including reviewing contracts with vendors and contracts involving employees and any other counseling on an as needed basis.



# **Annual Report: Teen Center and Atid**

**Submitted By: Rabbi Sam Rotenberg**

Rabbi Rotenberg oversees Atid and the Teen center

## **All members of the departments I am reporting on:**

Danny Beck (no longer a Sinai Temple Employee) and Jason Druyan

## **Top Achievements of Atid for 2019/20 include:**

By far, the annual Atid trip was the most successful program. This four-day Shabbaton, subsidized by the millennial initiative, allowed us to take 32 young adults to Jackson Hole, Wyoming for a deeply immersive Jewish community experience. Upon reading the thank you letters our participants wrote, one line stood out in particular. A woman on our trip wrote how before this trip, the Jewish community and finding a Jewish partner were not important to her. After the trip she knew she had to find a Jewish spouse. We were able to instill a genuine love of Judaism, Shabbat, and community during that weekend to those who joined us.

Atid High Holidays were also very successful. This being my second year, things ran much more smoothly in the services themselves, and a few other successes are worth mentioning:

- 1) Ticket sales were up about 30%.
- 2) We designed the tickets to look and feel like Sinai Temple tickets.
- 3) We also designed the pledge cards to look and feel like Sinai pledge cards but adjusted the amounts to "Atid" level giving amounts (essentially took off a zero from each tab).
- 4) After our cantorial soloist from last year moved to New York, I was able to train a new cantorial soloist, who our participants said, "made the service."
- 5) We raised a couple thousand dollars and had about 45% participation in the giving campaign.

This year we brought back Atid hikes, which had not taken place for some time. The program is very simple - an Atid volunteer creates a course for us to hike, and then we meet at the trail head as a group and hike! This year we got 20-30 participants for our hikes, and I made sure to create relational moments where participants got to know one another, and me. These hikes are particularly successful because it draws mostly first-time participants, and is a great way to build the Atid community

**Top Achievements of the Teen Center for 2019/20 include:**

Our Teen Center Retreat was by far our most successful event. Like the annual Atid trip, it allowed us to put the kids in an immersive experience where we could build community and instill Jewish values in a lasting way. This year was particularly successful because, after Matt Baram left, I worked very hard to onboard our new teen center director, Jason Druyan, as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. Jason started in July and the retreat was in September. The fact that Jason was ready to run the retreat, that our numbers were good for the retreat, and that we did not have to skip it this year was something I was personally proud of.

We had 34 teens go to AIPAC this year - more than any other year. The success was not only in the numbers, but Jason and I planned several preliminary meetings with the kids to prepare them. We had representatives from StandWithUs come and speak to our leadership council, and we had an evening with AIPAC representatives presenting to parents and kids about what to expect. At that event, I led a text study where we learned about the importance of respecting a dissenting opinion, and what it means to respect each other's convictions in general.

Holocaust Survivors Brunch: though I did not get to see it as I was working that morning in the religious school, I know we had about 40 teen volunteers interacting, interviewing, and sharing stories with local holocaust survivors.

**Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

Both Atid and Teen Center have had significant challenges this year. The challenges began the same way, with Matt Baram taking a new job starting in the summer of 2019. With Matt leaving, we hired Jason Druyan to lead the Teen Center, and promoted Danny Beck to lead Atid.

**Atid:**

Many things went well with Danny. He had a great mind for planning and implementing programs. However, he spent quite a lot of time planning each program, and our calendar felt much lighter than in years past. This might have been forgiven because of the fact that he was learning a new role, and helping me to onboard Jason Druyan. Ultimately, by the time he left, we had been moving in the direction of creating additional programming, but it was clear that the amount of programming we had from June to December 2019 did not meeting the standards of years past.

In late December, a rift was created between Danny and Sinai Temple. I spent hours and hours on the phone with Danny convincing him not to do or say anything that would cast Sinai Temple in a negative light. Beginning January, we essentially did not have an Atid Director, and then at the end of January right before the Atid trip, Danny left Sinai Temple altogether. A new Atid Director was handpicked by Rabbis Guzik and Sherman, and she appears to be phenomenal, but cannot start

working until July 2020. At this point it is actually a good thing - we are saving money on an Atid Director at a time when we can't have in person programming anyway. It has been a challenge since December as I have had to essentially run Atid, but I am confident that once our new director starts, between the experience I had with Danny, and with running the Atid programming myself, we will see new levels of success in the coming year.

### **Teen Center:**

Rabbi Guzik and I conducted all of the interviews for a new Teen Center Director in the Summer of 2019, until we decided to offer Jason Druyan the position. This past year has been a challenge to help Jason feel confident in his role. Our programming (besides the three events mentioned above) has been lackluster. Our numbers are down for typical programs like go-karting and roof-top movies, and were much lower for Chai School. Jason has a lot of learning to do still about what makes for a successful teen program in our community, and still needs to work on building a relationship with our teens. After being here for 8 years, the teens adored Matt. They grew up with Matt. Jason has been here for less than a year, many months of which were in the summer when kids are on break. He just doesn't have the relational pull that Matt did. This should hopefully come in time. For Chai School, I stepped in in a more direct way to ensure the success of our last trimester, which was slated to begin in late March. It appeared like it was going to be our strongest trimester since Matt left, before Covid-19 threw our plans up in the air. We are still unsure whether or not to keep Chai School courses going for this trimester, and will likely end up cancelling them altogether and starting fresh (G-d willing) in the fall.

### **Metrics:**

#### **Atid:**

- Attendance at Atid's Friday Night live services were up generally from about 60/70 people when Matt left to up to 125 people
- The annual Atid trip created 32 deeply devoted Jewish young adults, who I can tell based on the letters they wrote and surveys they completed are now committed to Judaism and the Jewish future.
- Ticket sales at Atid High Holidays were up 30%
- 30 Atid participants have volunteered to be shoppers for Sinai Temple members who cannot go to the store for whatever reason during this quarantine.

#### **Teen Center:**

- Largest AIPAC delegation ever
- 28 dedicated and active teens on our leadership council

- For those teens on the leadership council, many have been active since mommy-and-me classes, nearly 18 years!
- 40 teen volunteers at the Holocaust Survivors Brunch

**Goals:**

For both Atid and Teen Center, I hope to increase the level of programming in the coming year. I am sure this will be the case. In Atid, we have a confident director coming in and it will not be difficult to increase the level of impactful programming when compared to this past year. For the Teen Center, the problem is not increasing programs offered, but rather building a relationship with a confident Teen Center Director so kids feel drawn to come to programming. Jason had many great programs planned this past year, but only a few teens showed up, unless they were “big ticket” events like AIPAC, Holocaust Survivors Brunch, and the Retreat. My goal is for our teens to love the Teen Center Director, and for all kids 7th grade and up to see the teen center as another home for them.





# **Annual Report: Men's Club**

**Submitted By: Farshad Rafii, President**

**Committees:** The Men's Club portfolio committees include Dinner

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. **Dinner Committee** oversees the Burning Bush Gala.

**Committee members include:**

**Dinner Committee**

**Chair:**

**Members:** Eli Alyeshmerni, Cary Lerman, Mark haloosim, Shervin Behnam, Joseph Gabbaian, Frank Pournazarian, Jeff Kichaven, Bijan Bina, David Matloob, Farshad Rafii, and Farideh Rafii.

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

Fiscal year 2019-2020 has been a banner year for Sinai Temple Men's Club in terms of collaboration with other groups inside and outside Sinai Temple, communication with our membership, and quality of programming.

As for collaboration, we reached out to the **Sisterhood** and **Israel Center** at Sinai, and to the **Iranian American Jewish Federation** and **Nessah Synagogue** for the creation and implementation of several of our monthly programs. We also collaborated with **ATID** for a third running of the Secrets of Success career event for young professional. This program which had been scheduled to run in late April 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic.

Communication with Men's Club members and friends was placed on a solid footing during the past year by the regular publication of the (nearly weekly) **Men's Club Update**. The expertise and disciplined prompting of Rachel-Ann Levy and Emily Shefer were indispensable in publishing this newsletter. We also initiated a new column called "How I really Became Jewish". Several Men's Club members and Rabbi Wolpe contributed to this often touching and diverse chronicling of our journey to our Jewish faith. We are planning to collate these columns and use them as a platform for a face-to-face sharing during one of our future monthly meeting.

We hosted many heavily attended programs, a summary of which is described below:

- **August 2019:** Men's Club offered a multi-media presentation by ex-Mossad agent Yola Reitman called ***Operation Brother: The Untold Story of Rescuing the Ethiopian Jews***. This event was brought to us by the Israel Intelligence Heritage and Communication Center (IIHCC) and was attended by over 90 people.
- **September 2019:** Men's Club hosted a debate between author Scott Shay and renowned skeptic and scholar Michael Shermer entitled ***Questioning Religion and Atheism***. This debate, moderated by Rabbi Wolpe was attended by about 150 people, including many with little prior affiliation with Sinai.
- **October 2019:** In partnership with the Israel Center, the Men's Club sponsored a thought provoking presentation by Rabbi Elliot Dorff, distinguished professor of Jewish Law at AJU and a leader of the Masorti Conservative Movement. The presentation was titled ***Jewish Law and Ethics: Do They Collide?*** and attracted about 60 attendees.
- **November 2019:** Men's Club screened the documentary ***Life Will Smile***, followed by a discussion with its producer Steven Priovolos. *Life Will Smile* is a compelling 40-minute documentary that tells the touching story of the Jewish community on the Greek island of Zakynthos, the only community in Europe to have 100% survivorship during the Holocaust. Attendance exceeded 100.
- **December 2019:** Men's Club hosted a touching multimedia presentation entitled *The Battle of My Life* featuring music and remarks by IDF veteran Nir Rubin. This program, offered in partnership with Sisterhood and the Israel Center, was brought to Sinai temple by Peace of Mind: The Israel Psychotrauma Center, an organization dedicated to helping IDF veterans recover from the stresses of military service. It was attended by about 150 people.
- **January 2019:** Men's Club hosted an address by U.S. Special Representative for Iran, Brian Hook, on the Trump Administration's Iran policy and the way forward, followed by a conversation with Rabbi David Wolpe. Titled ***Pressuring the Iranian Regime, Standing with the Iranian People***. This program was offered in collaboration with the Iranian American Jewish Federation, The Eretz Cultural Center, and the Nessah Synagogue and drew an audience of about 900 people from throughout the LA area.
- **February 2019:** Men's Club hosted **Rabbi Abraham Skorka** in conversation about interfaith relations with **Rabbi Erez Sherman** and **Father Ed Benioff** of Church of the Good Shepherd. Rabbi Skorka is an Argentine biophysicist, rabbi and author and has become one of the Pope's most trusted spiritual confidantes. This event, titled ***The Pope's Rabbi***, was offered in collaboration with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and Church of the Good Shepherd of Beverly Hills. About 130 people attended.
- **March 2019:** Men's Club hosted a presentation by Rabbi David Golinkin. Called ***What To Do About the State of Judaism in the Jewish State***, the presentation was about how Judaism has developed and transformed in Israel. Attendance was about 50.

- **April 2019:** The Men's Club tested a Virtual Book Club under the theme of ***Reaching Across the Divide***, aimed at creating a productive dialogue about critical issues that have polarized the society on key political, social, gender, religious, cultural, and other issues. This book club was rolled out to the entire Sinai community on May 12.
- **May 2019:** The Men's Club hosted a conversation between renowned psychologist Dr. Dale Atkins and Rabbi Sherman entitled **The Kindness Advantage: Building Resilience During Challenging Times**. parents, which Dr. Atkins offered advice and for parents and grandparents to teach kids empathy, inspire a culture of compassion and connection, and empower children to make a difference in their community and the world. Attended by about 30 individuals via zoom.
- **June 2019:** Men's Club will host author and activist Abby Pogrebin who will talk about her fascinating experiences during a year-long journey that involved attending Jewish celebrations across the country. Her book is titled *My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew*.

Men's Club also held additional special programs and celebrated milestones.

1. **Shabbat Lunch Honoring Mr. Mansur Eslamboly** was held on February 1, 2020. We honored Sinai Temple member **Mansour Eslamboly** for his many years of incredible service to make Sinai Temple a warm, welcoming community. Mr. Eslamboly received the Men's Club's **Abraham's Tent Award**. Co-sponsored with Israel Center.
2. **World Wide Wrap** was held on February 2nd, 2020. This program was generously sponsored by Irwin Fields and Selma Daye, in honor and memory of Selma's son and husband. Dr. Jason Kahan chaired this very successful event, with the assistance of Shervin Behnam, and Ebby Tabariai.
3. This year's **Burning Bush** honoring Farshad and Farideh Rafii and Aryell Cohen and aiming to raise funds for Sinai Temple and Ethiopian Israeli Youth had to be postponed. Faranak Rostamian chaired this event and spent significant effort in organizing it.
4. The Men's Club contributed \$20,000 to Sinai Temple from the proceeds of the **2019 Burning Bush Gala**.
5. **Men's Club Shabbaton** Scheduled for April 11, 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic.

#### **Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

During the past year we made another attempt to get our long-planned **Millennial Initiative** off the ground. While some progress was made in clarifying the objectives of this initiative and discussing collaboration with ATID, the actual launching of mentorship and other educational programming

were delayed by leadership changes in ATID and the pandemic. The Men's Club contributed \$40,000 to ATID in support of its activities.

This year's **Burning Bush** honoring Farshad and Farideh Rafii and Aryell Cohen and aiming to raise funds for Sinai Temple and Ethiopian Israeli Youth had to be postponed. Faranak Rostamian chaired this event and spent significant effort in organizing it.

**Men's Club Shabbaton** Scheduled for April 11, 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic.



## **Annual Report: Sisterhood**

**Submitted By Lina Pournazarian & Leslie Wachtel, Sisterhood Co-Presidents**

The Co-Presidents of Sinai Temple Sisterhood's guide the Sisterhood too meet their mission with active participation by the Officers and Board of Directors

**Committees:** Sisterhood

**The mission of these committees are as follows:**

1. The Sisterhood Committee empowers a diverse group of women of varying ages to observe and promote Jewish values and traditions, enjoying warmth and friendship in the process. While enriching our lives through our many activities, we support Sinai Temple, Conservative Judaism and the greater community through our social action programs and fundraising efforts. We value the energy, ideas and participation that our members bring.

**Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

Our community service projects are a key part of our mission. These include Project Outreach which delivers food and household products to homebound seniors, snacks for KEEN basketball games which empower children with disabilities, Camp Ramah Scholarships and participation in Spoonful of Hesed and Packing with Purpose.

We visited the *Museum of Tolerance* where we toured the exhibits, listened to a survivor tell her story, ate lunch together and discussed the meaning of our experience.

Organized a women's group attending AIPAC as part of the Sinai Temple delegation.

Sisterhood Game Nights, scheduled at the same time as Men's Club Poker Nights, serve as a fun, social program that brings members together. Mahjong lessons are graciously donated by one of our members and we encourage contributions to Torah Fund as payment.

Note: The Coronavirus Pandemic caused us to cancel our 2020 Young Professional March of the Living Mission. We will offer the Mission again in 2021.

**Challenges of 2019/20 include:**

Each year we broaden our program content to engage women with varied interests.

Additionally, we added more evening programs to include women who work fulltime and we continued lunchtime programs for women who are available during the day.

**Metrics:**

Sisterhood Catering provides delicious and beautiful food for Bar/Bat Mitzvah, wedding and new baby celebrations while serving as our largest fundraiser. Our Judaica Shop provides beautiful candlesticks, Kiddush cups, tallitot and more. The main beneficiaries of al funds raised are our schools, Temple and Temple families.

**Goals:**

We will continue to offer new and innovative educational, spiritual, social action and social programming to meet our mission.



# **Annual Report: Sinai Temple Board of Governors**

**Submitted By: Barton H. Kogan and Paul Herman, M.D., Co-Chairs of the Board of Governors**

The mission of the Sinai Temple Board of Governors (BOG) is to independently review and discuss the issues and policies of importance to Sinai Temple, and support our leaders, clergy, staff, members, our President and the Sinai Board of Directors (BOD) to develop, host and sponsor religious and cultural activities consistent with Sinai's mission and all special projects as directed by the Sinai Temple President.

The BOG was established in 1973 to provide a forum to discuss synagogue policy and programs; and to advise the Temple president and BOD. It was envisioned to tap the talent and experience of former BOD members and congregational leaders not currently serving on the BOD, to offer their time, suggestions and good counsel.

Members are elected by the BOD as recommended by the BOG co-chairs. Temple members of at least 3 years who are also past members of the BOD are eligible. All Past Temple presidents also serve on the BOG.

The BOG seeks to complement the BOD's efforts by supporting and planning projects of religious, educational, social or artistic significance that may be enjoyed by the members of Sinai Temple.

## **Past Projects and Temple support:**

- **Yamim Nora'im**—An 88 page supplementary prayer volume for the High Holy Days.
- **Mitzvah Magnet**—Five core Mitzvot and the hours of Shabbat services and the Daily Minyan.
- **Pocket Calendars**—Handy calendars with Jewish Holidays and Shabbat candle lighting times.
- **Welcome Booklet**—A guide for non-Jews and guests to our Shabbat morning worship.
- **Sinai Yellow Pages**—This booklet enabled members to patronize each other if they so chose.
- **Sponsor Community Sinai events**—The BOG sponsored and hosted Temple wide parties and other events honoring Sinai clergy and lay leadership in the Temple and in the community; contributed to the Sinai Temple Centennial and other Dinner Journals, made other appropriate donations honoring our Temple leaders as called upon; sponsored events welcoming new members and clergy; the Sinai Go Green Project and the annual Sinai-wide BOG Shabbat Swap, Sinai Centennial Mitzvah Day and contributed to *Masorti*, *Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs*, and *Sinai Temple* annual fundraising dinners honoring our lay and professional leadership.

- **Archive Sinai Temple artifacts**—At the request of our Temple president, the BOG, permanently updated, categorized and verified all Sinai Temple religious and secular artifacts with our office staff.

#### **2019-20 New and Continuing Projects and Sinai Temple support:**

- **Gifts to our B’nai Mitzvah**—Sponsor the gift of Rabbi Wolpe’s book, *Why Be Jewish?*
- **Curators**—Coordinate and select exhibitions of paintings and photographs in the Merage Art Gallery.
- **Serve as Usher, Greeters and on the Bima** for Shabbat and Holiday services as requested annually.
- **Serve on Temple Committees** in all aspects of Temple operations as part of our charge to offer sage advice and counsel to Sinai Temple.
- **“Better Together” Religious School Shabbat Project**—The BOG has joined with Danielle Kassin and Michal Morriskamil to assist in this stellar fledgling program designed to bridge the generations at Sinai to include interaction with 6-8<sup>th</sup> graders and more senior groups from Sinai and the Israel Levin Center.
- **Visibility**—Increase our branding within the Temple and recruit additional members who meet the requirements set in the Sinai Temple Bylaws.





## **Annual Report: Chai Society**

**Submitted By: Richard Greenberg & Rachelle Marcus, Chai Society Co-Chairs**

We are the official Shabbat greeters of Sinai Temple, welcoming worshipers and guests twice a month. We currently have a membership of over 50 volunteers. Membership is open to anyone who is 60 years of age or older. The Chai Society greets the second and fourth Shabbat each month and meets every other month for brunch at a local restaurant.

### **Top achievements of 2019/20 include:**

During the past year we attended many plays, the Disney Summer Concert series, celebrated Hanukkah with our annual latke dinner party and enjoyed a summer get together at one of our member's homes. We attend many Jewish events together.



## **Annual Report:**

### **Mount Sinai Mortuaries and Memorial Parks**

**Submitted By: Eric J. Diamond, Chairman of the Sinai Temple Cemetery Management Committee**

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Sinai Temple Cemetery Management Committee. Current conditions, particularly “social distancing” and limits on public gatherings, necessarily impact operations at Mount Sinai’s mortuary and cemeteries. However, the Parks’ skilled and dedicated employees continue to provide respectful and compassionate service to our community. They provide our families with a measure of “normal” in the face of sadness. Only through their efforts is Mount Sinai able to provide the entire Los Angeles Jewish Community with the outstanding service that has been our hallmark for more than sixty (60) years.

In addition to maintaining the critical human element in its operations, Mount Sinai also achieved several notable operational accomplishments.

- This year we completed development of the Courts of *Tanach* section, adjacent to the *Tanach* Chapel in Hollywood Hills, and thereby added more than 1,500 interment spaces to the cemetery.
- At the Simi Valley cemetery, development is underway on nearly 2,000 interment spaces in the Plains of Abraham section. While slightly delayed by weather conditions, this section should be completed in early Summer.

Local COVID-19 conditions resulted in less than fifty (50) virus related cases. These do not materially impact financial results. In contrast, sales and service excellence resulted in a approximately seven percent (7%) growth in both mortuary and cemetery revenue.

Responding to the needs of the community, Mount Sinai will soon debut its new “Traditions” program enhancing its ability to provide cost effective mortuary services to the community. This initiative, combined with a growing focus on providing Jewish mortuary services for burials in other cemeteries, locally and in Israel, demonstrate Mount Sinai’s ongoing commitment to provide cost effective options to the Jewish community.

Each year Mount Sinai “recycles” nearly \$1 million dollars back into the community through financial support to Sinai Temple and other local causes. Strong operational efforts allowed Mount Sinai to undertake an additional and extraordinary commitment to Sinai Akiba Academy. Following the remarkable \$5 million scholarship pledge from Anna and Bill Tenenblatt, Mount Sinai committed \$2 million as a partial match to this incredible

gift. Transfers to date from Mount Sinai to Sinai Akiba Academy total \$400,000. Payment on the \$1.6 million balance of the pledge will follow over the next few years.

My colleagues on the Cemetery Management Committee, many of them devoting decades of their lives to this service, provide the Parks with lay leadership by setting and monitoring priorities and goals. Committee members Ira M. Friedman, Tom Lane, Abner D. Goldstine, Merritt, Eric Swanson, Jamie Berman, Jimmy Delshad, Joel Weinstein, Kurt Smalberg, Linda Camras, M. Milo Mandel, Robert Held, Malcolm Cosgrove, Milton Hyman, Perry Wallack, Richard Weston and Tom Flesh demonstrate caring commitment by lending their time, professional experience and thoughtful judgment to support the professional staff. Without them, and the additional Sinai Temple directors and lay leaders serving on our sub-committees, we would not achieve the success that is the hallmark of our operations.