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July, 2020

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Cantorial Soloist Kelly Onickel

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To our Temple Emanu-El Community:

When we look back on our lives, there is little doubt that this time in history will stand out amongst so many moments in our lives.

For the past few months, since the global pandemic reached Michigan, we have continued to grapple with the question of how to foster spirituality, prayer, and community while coming to grips with the reality that we would be unable to join together physically for an undetermined amount of time.

While the transition to online worship and learning has taken adjustment, and our understanding of what it means to gather together has been required to shift, I have been heartened to witness the beauty that we have found in the midst of this new temporary necessity. Together we have celebrated joyous times with b'nai mitzvah and blessings of marriages. We have also had the opportunity to learn in different ways from different sources and teachers, and we have been able to welcome our members whether at home, on staycation, enjoying a beautiful day outside, or even just in their pajamas.

Since it became clear a number of months ago that our community would be facing the effects of the global pandemic well through the summer and fall, the leadership of Temple Emanu-El has been in contact with medical experts, area Jewish professionals, and colleagues from around the country in order to identify the best way to approach the upcoming High Holiday season.

As a product of those many conversations and of larger conversations amongst area congregations and the Michigan Board of Rabbis, and in order to ensure that we are beginning a New Year keeping our Temple Family healthy, Temple Emanu-El will be, like our fellow congregations in the city, gathering for High Holidays virtually this year.

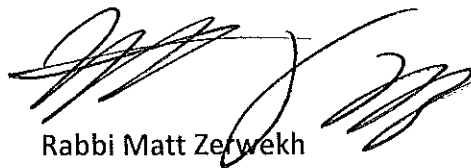
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This may feel like a loss – there is no other time of our year when we gather in such numbers in our building, and not gathering in person represents yet another change in our lives due to this pandemic. I, for one, lament losing the opportunity to greet everyone face to face, to connect with as close to the whole temple community as we may get in the year.

While it is natural to feel a sense of loss, this year's format also presents new opportunities for a creative approach to a very 21st century way of gathering. We are excited to be taking advantage of the new opportunities the current situation offers. We are also very aware that with this new format comes new challenges and even perhaps unease that our High Holidays may feel wholly unfamiliar. We are working diligently to craft services and opportunities that retain the comfort of the familiar while taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by this year's online format.

We will be offering ways to appreciate the beautiful grounds at Temple Emanu-El as well as opportunities to visit memorial plaques in the sanctuary during Yom Kippur, so please keep an eye out for further information from us about what to expect and how to participate in this year's High Holiday season.

If you have any questions about how to connect or anything else regarding High Holidays, please reach out to me or any one of our wonderful staff members in the front office. We are here to help you remain connected to your Temple Emanu-El family, wherever we may find ourselves.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Zerwekh', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

Rabbi Matt Zerwekh