



Congregation Ner Tamid

on the Greenspan Campus for Jewish Life, Learning, and Spiritual Renewal

"A Special Place to Belong"

Religious School in the Time of Corona

On August 9th, 25 dedicated religious school teachers and madrichim gathered virtually to finalize preparations for a most unusual year of religious school. Interim Head of School, Cantor Hutchings asked me to prepare an introductory statement of encouragement and appreciation to this remarkable group of people...

Who knew? Who knew the one thing that has been the butt of Jewish humor and sarcasm was actually something we-meaning teachers, parents, kids, would truly really and honestly be missed? Namely, religious school!

Remember that old joke? There is a knock on the bedroom door...

"Time to get up! It's time to get ready for religious school!"

"But I dunna want to go."

"You have to!"

"Why, tell me why?"

"Because I am your mother that's why. And besides you're 40 years old and you are the rabbi!"

Yep, even rabbis find it hard to get up for religious school. Sometimes I wish God had made an 8-day week, but alas we have only seven. And this 7th day, Sunday, is one in which many children would love to be out playing sports, sleeping in, playing video games and... *did I say sleeping in?*

Well it turns out, surprise, that despite their protestations, the kids miss us. To paraphrase Sally Field, "*They really, really like us!*" Maybe not everyone, but enough. Enough to keep us going. Enough to remind us that Judaism and the Jewish future is in good hands. Enough that we are trying our damndest to figure out a way to be together despite Covid and safety concerns and worried Jewish mothers (and fathers). Split sessions, sanitizing rooms, web streaming classes... We can do it all. And why not? We are at the forefront of Jewish continuity. Hope is our middle name. Creativity our first name. And "I am a proud Jew" our last name.

We are here. In person. Virtually. Where ever we need to be.

We are where we need to be because we know that in this time of uncertainty, our children need some reassurance that what is important will not fade away. And that what is meaningful will always be so. We are determined to be together as a community to laugh; to learn; to play; whether it is from six feet away or six miles away. This we pledge: **We will find a way to be close to each other.** We are Jewish virus busters. Teachers and students and parents who are strong, courageous, committed Jews. And we will find a way. Somehow, we always do.

Rabbi Sanford Akselrad

Written with loving gratitude to our amazing group of teachers, madrichim, parent committee members, parents and students who remind us that resilience is the most Jewish characteristic of all. School begins August 30th ...please register now.