

May, 2022

Annual Report for Social Justice

Dear Board Members

The core values of Temple Isaiah remain the same - B'Tzelem Elohim (in the image of God). We believe in the inherent dignity of each person and that our mission is to help form people to be their best selves, and to work towards a more just and humane world.

“Tzedek tzedek tirdof - Justice justice you shall pursue.” This ancient commandment from the book of Deuteronomy applies to every generation of Jews who aspire to be a holy people helping to build a more just and compassionate world.

One of the many ways we pursue justice is through the practice of citizenship, both our own commitment, protecting the right for others, and most importantly, helping our congregation and its members, young and old, to be engaged and informed citizens.

This year, unlike any other, as we emerge to what is a very uncertain “new normal” Isaiaans have continued to do the slow and patient work of creating opportunities to pursue justice and help to repair the world. One of my goals as the Vice President of Social Justice was to continue strengthening the relationships between the many justice communities at Temple Isaiah and to help find ways for us to support one another as we all work to make our world a more just and equitable place.

It has been my privilege to serve as your Vice President of Social Justice for the last four years. I look forward to returning to the organizing work of One LA IAF within Temple Isaiah, and hope in the weeks and months ahead to be meeting with as many of you as possible to find out what it is that you care about and how we can work together to address your concerns.

I, like all of you, feel blessed to be part of this amazing community where we witness every day the hard work of our clergy, staff, and lay leaders to create and embody what it means to be part of a sacred community.

Am Tzedek: Isaians Pursuing Justice - Chair Janet Hirsch
(janethirsch5@gmail.com)

Am Tzedek: Isaians Pursuing Justice is Temple Isaiah's organizing group. Made up of a core team of Temple Isaiah lay leaders, Am Tzedek is the core organizing group of One LA-IAF at Temple Isaiah.

Our religious and democratic traditions remind us of how important it is to do our part by showing up. There is a real, transformational way to push back against the powerful forces that want us to believe we have no power. NOW IS THE TIME TO SHOW YOU CARE.

Organizing helps us build the power needed to act together around a negotiated and shared agenda of issues and clearly demonstrates that even in the face of relentlessly bad news we DO HAVE the power to act with others from across the County to affect real change and improve the lives of everyone who chooses to make this part of the world their home.

One LA leaders have been hard at work over the past year. Together with other One LA member institutions we had over a thousand conversations to hear from leaders across our city what the issues that our communities care about.

Without exception Angelenos care about housing, homelessness, mental health, access to healthcare and the future of the Los Angeles economy.

On Sunday, May 15th over 350 leaders came together to engage with candidates for Mayor and Supervisorial District 3 to ensure that we have a meaningful and productive relationship with whomever will be our next Mayor and Supervisor.

Building real, authentic relationships with others helps us strengthen and build our own Isaian community. However, in order to engage with others from very different backgrounds, we need to build relationships across religion, race, socioeconomic status, geography, and language. We do this by acting together through our membership in One LA IAF.

As we are reminded:

It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it. [Rabbi Tarfon]

Family Philanthropy Club - Co-chairs - Danielle Feinblum (Dfeinblum@gmail.com) and Lauren Ravitz (lauren@laurenravitz.com)

We had some starts and stops this year due to Covid but the Family Philanthropy Club did manage to squeeze in a few really impactful events. In December a group of our families visited Wags & Walks where the children learned about the importance of animal shelters and had an opportunity to read books to the dogs. In March our families participated in a fun afternoon of painting art that will be hung in a children's ward of a hospital through the Foundation for Hospital Art.

This coming year we look forward to a more robust calendar of events and a refresh of our membership to attract newer families with children.

Green Team - Chair - Steve Fox (minusksf@aol.com)

“Combating Climate Change-Our Systemic Sickness. Borrowing from Pachamama Alliance, we offered four sessions examining climate change not just as a problem, but as a symptom:

Insights from an Indigenous Partner: Arkan Lushwala dramatically contrasted the traditional wisdom of living in spiritual harmony with nature with simply materially dominating it.

A Healthy Economy Should Be Designed to Thrive, Not Grow: Kate Raworth's TED talk stimulated a discussion on the appropriate yardstick for measuring an economy—should it be the GDP or our wellbeing?

The Corporation, Wealth, and Power: How corporations became so powerful and money became the equivalent of speech were followed by efforts to reverse this trajectory, such as Move to Amend, and Type B (Benefit) Corporations.

Steven Donziger vs Chevron: Our Mary MacVean interviewed the embattled attorney who won an uncollected \$9B judgment in Ecuador for the pollution and devastation caused by oil exploration and extraction.

In each case, a short video was followed by a facilitated Zoom discussion.

The 11th Commandment: With Increasing Fires, Storms, Droughts--We Need It, and We Need it Now. We were selected by the Big Bold Jewish Climate Fest to make the argument for an 11th commandment and then have individuals generate what they thought should have been added to the Big Ten.

CIPL Honors Temple Isaiah. We were one of three congregations honored by California Interfaith Power and Light at its awards night. Our award was for education and advocacy.

Investing in Positive Change: Incorporating Green and Social Impact Goals Into Your Investment Portfolio. Our temple member Jim Berliner's presentation was our follow-up to Bill McKibben's talk about how our money can influence the pace of dealing with climate change.

Pre-School Social Action Committee - Co-chairs Samantha Rapkin, Rachael Kallick, and Erin Felman.

This past year the preschool Social Action committee held two fundraisers, the PATH Thanksgiving Market in the Fall and a Jewish Family Services project in the Spring. For the Fall market, students

“shopped” for Thanksgiving dinner items and put together decorative baskets for families in need, through PATH, People Assisting The Homeless. In the Spring, students made ‘welcome’ kits for children in domestic violence shelters and those entering the foster care system. We used both opportunities to teach the kids about mitzvot and the importance of tzedakah.

In the addition to the fundraisers, each class took turns participating in donating and putting together non-perishable snack bags for the un-housed, which were delivered monthly to PATH. Families in the preschool also donated gently used items to the Rashidi family and helped to decorate their first home with handmade art!

We intend to continue on with the PATH snack bags next year, picking up again in July, and look forward to whatever the new chairs have in store for us in addition to that!

The Co-Chairs for 2022/2023 have not been identified yet.

RAC-CA - Chair - Debra Silverman (debrasilverman@gmail.com)

This year the RAC-CA leadership team and leaders from synagogues across California voted to change our approach to legislation and lobbying. Instead of choosing up to five issue areas and 3 - 5 bills each legislative session, RAC-CA will be engaging in a multi-year campaign across one issue area with the goals of: developing expertise, deepening relationships with legislators, and building partnerships with grassroots organizations engaged in the work. The first multi-year issue is climate change, and it will be rolled out via webinar on June 9. This is an excellent shift in focus, particularly around relationship building. Instead of chasing legislation, we have the time and space to build meaningful partnerships and develop leaders, which are the essential building blocks to effective organizing.

Roots and Wings - Co-Chairs - Michele Bollinger (Bollinger.family@gmail.com) and Carin Castelnuovo-Tedesco (castelnuovo.tedesco@gmail.com)

We are proud to report, we're working with an amazing group of eager students this year (much like every year) and a terrific group of 9 returning/new mentors in our Roots & Wings group. Each mentor is matched with a group of 3-5 students, making themselves available if students want to stay in touch beyond the classroom. As co-chairs, we are working directly with the lead AVID teacher at University Charter High School to plan for each bi-monthly session we lead and ensure we integrate topical discussions or activities accordingly. Our goal remains strong: to help bridge the gap between what the AVID teacher frames/teaches week-to-week and what next steps or concerns lie ahead. Our sessions have covered everything from learning the difference between public/private college options, finding extra curricular activities that don't cost money, working on applications/essays and meeting deadlines, researching/applying for scholarships, writing thank you notes(!), to envisioning living with a roommate, practicing ways to connect and build a social circle, and living independently. Overall, we try to help calm their nerves and guide them towards college when their families don't have the experience/knowledge. It's incredibly fulfilling to see the students soak up life skills.

For example, this year's sessions have been "*What to consider when selecting a college*", an activity covering "*Important things to do in your first year in college*", speaker and workshop focused on "*Drafting a resume for your first job/internship*", and preparing for our last activity of the semester "*Mock Interviews / Entry-level jobs and internships*" where each mentor will represent HR recruiting from a specific company and students will interview with each of them.

Lastly, Roots & Wings will be hosting a senior brunch for the students, where mentors will present AVID stoles to each of their students, and each student will stand and give a short toast to the class.

It is truly our pleasure working with the students. Carin and Michele plan to continue co-chairing next year, adding mentors to support students in 11th and 12th grade classes.

Voter Engagement Group - Chair - Idelle Davidson
(idelledavidson@gmail.com)

A man came before the rabbi and said: "I have no money to pay my taxes and therefore will not be allowed to vote. "Then sell your tefillin and pay the taxes," said the rabbi. Tefillin, you can borrow from another. The right to vote is yours alone." – Adapted from Moment Magazine, 2016

Our focus this year has been on voter education, lobbying for voter rights, and getting out the vote in underserved communities.

Education

- Founded the Future Voters' Club, a civics and leadership club for Isaiah teens (co-advisor, Carla Kopf).
- Created postcards to send to 16- and 17-year-olds reminding them to pre-register to vote. A QR code links directly to the Secretary of State's voter registration form (postcard cover art by Keira Mohammed and Gabi Nascimiento).
- Initiated and co-lead (with Jeffrey Ellis) our major event of the year: Isaiah's L.A. City Council District 5 Candidates Forum.
- Other programming: The Charlottesville Trial, the Politics of Gerrymandering.
- Upcoming: Program: This November's ballot initiatives, presented by L.A. League of Women Voters.

Lobbying

- Active participation in the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism's (RAC) efforts to pass federal voting rights legislation and to reform the U.S. Senate filibuster.

The Midterms: Getting Out the Vote

- As with 2020, we are once again partnering with RAC's Every Voice, Every Vote postcard campaign to reach underserved communities of color. We provide important election information and encourage voters to get to the polls. To date, 65 members have sent about 3,000 postcards to voters in Georgia and North Carolina. We will continue with Florida, Arizona, Texas, Alabama and more. We also work with The Civics Center to help newly graduated high school students register to vote.

