

June 2020

## Annual Report for Social Justice

Dear Board Members

As Martin Buber reminds us

*“A human being becomes whole not in virtue of a relation to himself [only] but rather in virtue of an authentic relation to another human being(s).”*

This year, both before the COVID-19 pandemic, and since then Isaiaans have been doing the slow and patient work of creating opportunities to pursue justice and help to repair the world.

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.

All the justice leaders at Temple Isaiah are very grateful for the continued support of the Clergy and Board.

It became clear (as soon as COVID-19 hit) that the justice leaders at Isaiaans could act as a wonderful resource to help with Isaiah’s outreach to the community. Their proven ability to work together, based on strong relationships, has reinforced how important relationships are to all our justice work.

One of my goals as the Vice President of Social Justice is to continue strengthening the relationships between the justice communities and find ways for us to support one another as we work to make our city a place that works for everyone.

Am Tzedek: Isaiaans Pursuing Justice is made up of a team of leaders who learn together how to build intentional public relationships that are built carefully and patiently over time. Through our relationship with One LA - IAF we organize around a core group of common values. We are learning how to be engaged public citizens versed in the art of listening, understanding, and compromising.

Soon after the "Safer at Home" mandate we realized that we needed to organize to avoid social isolation. We quickly created One LA Connect as a way to reach into each member institution (e.g. Temple Isaiah/St. Brigid Catholic Church/St. Johns Health and Wellness Clinic) and between the member institutions. One LA Connect's main goal was to strategize with leaders from each institution and come up with ways to engage their members. We came up with resources, and trainings that could be used at Temple Isaiah, ChaiVillageLA and the 29 other One LA member institutions throughout LA County. We taught hundreds of people how to use Zoom and created powerpoints for leaders to use on how to apply for unemployment, renter protections, resources for the essential works in our county, How to apply for a PPP Loan, and many others.

These have proven to be very successful in helping our fellow Los Angelenos, and allowing them to engage in public life. It soon became apparent that our, so called, safety net had some big holes in it. One being that essential, undocumented workers, who pay taxes using an ITIN number, are ineligible to receive any CARES funding.

One May 5, 2020 via Zoom over 1,200 leaders (1,000 on zoom and the remainder on facebook live) came together at a CA IAF Statewide Townhall to engage with legislatures around how to address this injustice and we continue to work on this, and other issues in LA County, LA City, and throughout California.

We are re(launching) our campaign of Sacred Conversations: Building Relationships and Creating Change on Zoom. We have trained (and will continue to train leaders) in how to organize and conduct these small group meetings. How to listen to each others' stories, and to discover common issues. It is here that we will develop the trust necessary to move from private pain to public acknowledgement of the issue at the root of the pain. It is in these meetings that the potential for acting on issues begins to emerge. [janethirsch59@gmail.com](mailto:janethirsch59@gmail.com)

RAC-CA We continue to be strong supporters of RAC-CA and its advocacy work. Due to COVID-19 they too had to change their goals, and are now focusing on the issues of Housing the Homeless, Criminal Justice Reform, Immigrant Justice, Health Care, and Economic Justice.

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Green Team In support of its major goals of promoting individual, institutional, and societal changes to achieve environmental justice and sustainability, the major Green Team activities this year were:

- Arranging for environmentalist Bill McKibben, founder of [350.org](http://350.org), to be this year's Albert Lewis Lecturer
- Presenting the film, "*Wasted, the Story of Food Waste*" along with an appropriately vegan catered meal.
- Generating material to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, including a climate change presentation by USC Professor Jeremy Kagan
- Supporting Youth Climate Strike movement's events.
- Initiating a relationship with IKAR for joint programs
- Assisting in the Cool Congregation program development

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ChaiVillageLA - Even with COVID-19, and perhaps because of it, members of ChaiVillageLA are more interconnected than ever. Many have formed tight friendships through member-led caring services and by participating in high-caliber programs on topics as diverse as geopolitics, the environment, health and the arts. Members rely on a packed weekly newsletter and a dedicated website for calendar information. The pandemic has affected in-person volunteer projects like PATH and Operation Mend but their voter registration/community engagement group is highly energized and working virtually on safe and fair elections.

[idelledavidson@gmail.com](mailto:idelledavidson@gmail.com) and ([www.chaivillagela.org](http://www.chaivillagela.org))

Family Philanthropy Club continues to be one of the most successful programs at Temple Isaiah. It was born out of the desire to help Temple Isaiah families engage in deep, meaningful and sustainable partnerships with non-profit organizations concerned with a variety of issues facing Los Angeles, including, but not limited to, hunger, homelessness, child and teen welfare and sustainability. The ultimate goal of the FPC is to establish deep connections between communities that are close geographically but are worlds apart economically, socially and religiously, to open our children's hearts and minds to issues and struggles beyond their own backyard, and to provide a forum for Temple Isaiah families to do this work together. Due to COVID-19 their activities have changed, however they are still finding ways for people to volunteer online and having zoom gatherings. They currently have an active group of 125 families. Jessica Dabney and Hillary Hartman will be handing over the day-to-day running of this important program to Lauren Ravitz [Lauren@laurenravitz.com](mailto:Lauren@laurenravitz.com) and Danielle Feinblum [dfeinblum@gmail.com](mailto:dfeinblum@gmail.com)

Roots and Wings - this program continues to connect students of University High School with mentors from Temple Isaiah. They strive to create a temple–public school partnership that mutually benefits both institutions through purpose-driven dialogue, empowerment, and relationship-building. By invoking many positive Jewish values, the mentorship program enables students to broaden their world experience and helps them achieve success in high school and beyond. Mentors agree that while the relationships have impacted their mentees in many positive ways, their own experience has also been deeply meaningful as a way to give back to their larger Los Angeles community. The current group of eight mentors have worked with 20 Senior AVID students -

[jenniferkforman@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferkforman@gmail.com). If you would like to see the heartwarming powerpoint the students put together to thank their mentors here it is: [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/15wBb\\_WSDwreKaLD543MqZwC3xb4TSUvNPIYi-8HYWQ8/edit#slide=id.g85697f9bc8\\_0\\_115](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/15wBb_WSDwreKaLD543MqZwC3xb4TSUvNPIYi-8HYWQ8/edit#slide=id.g85697f9bc8_0_115)

Pre-School Social Action Committee - a key focus of everything we do at Temple Isaiah is Justice and it is no different in our pre-school where the children have hands on experiences in creating blessing bags, purchasing shoes, and packing lunches to be distributed by PATH. Teachers and parents are committed to the jewish ideal of tikkun olam and work on various projects through the year that deal with real issues in an age appropriate way -

[heidishermangrey@gmail.com](mailto:heidishermangrey@gmail.com). Next year Michelle Dar will be the new Chair.

We will always be community determined to build (and live) in a world of loving kindness.

Respectfully submitted  
Janet Hirsch  
VP of Social Justice