

# Area clergy share heartfelt wishes for sweet new year

## Shanah Tovah!

*Editor's Note:*

We are in the midst of the High Holiday season in all the ways that our diverse community approaches the Divine. This is the second of two installments from area clergy; the first appeared in our Sept. 22 edition. Let the stirring sounds of the shofar call us to examine ourselves, to work hard to be better people and to do what is right for ourselves and others. Most of all, may you have a sweet new year and many blessings of health, spirit and peace.



**Cantor Sheri Allen**

Makom Shelanu Congregation

Recently, I received a small book with an expansive amount of wisdom. Written by David Whyte, it's titled "Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words." In each chapter, the author parses the mystery and magnificence of 52 words.

One of them, a word very much on our minds at this time of year, is forgiveness. We can debate about whether it's harder to seek

forgiveness or grant it, but either way, our tradition compels us to try and do both. We engage in this process because, well...short answer: It's a mitzvah. And we hope that the compassion we show toward each other will result in the Holy One showing compassion toward us and granting us atonement.

But what if we are able to ask for forgiveness, yet can't seem to extend that forgiveness to others? How do we rise above our pain and move forward? After all, there's a deadline looming — we're supposed to wipe the slate clean by Yom Kippur! David Whyte provides an answer: "The great mercy is that the sincere act of trying to forgive, even if it is not entirely successful, is a form of blessing and forgiveness itself."

In other words, if forgiveness is an act in progress, we are on the right path. And it might take the gift of time and distance to be able to look back and realize that the hurt we've experienced or witnessed has motivated us to explore and create new, promising opportunities and paths ahead.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention another word that I knew I wouldn't find in Mr. Whyte's book: *teshuvah*, which has often been defined as "repentance." It

actually means "return." Return implies that we have been gone — somewhere. Whether that means being physically gone or emotionally disconnected, we are lost, and now need to find our way back. I've felt particularly lost lately — in a world I no longer recognize. One in which fundamental truths are questioned; the rights and dignity of so many people are being stripped from them; and intolerance, hate and bigotry threaten to undermine our democracy. And I've asked myself: How can I find my way back to a place of security and hope for the future?

Our Mahzor reminds us: *Tefillah* (prayer), *teshuvah* (return) and *tzedakah* (engaging in acts of justice) can help us navigate how we choose to live our lives in an uncertain world. Prayer helps us to find goodness — or the potential for goodness — in the world and others, and reminds us that there is still much to be grateful for, even when things look bleak. *Tzedakah*: Acting with others to mitigate suffering and fight injustice can reinvigorate hope that together, we can make a difference. Only then can we return to a more familiar place — a place in which we are not alone, where change is possible and where, through our acts, we can sense God's presence.

*L'Shanah Tovah!*



**Rabbi Michael Tevya Cohen**  
The Legacy Senior Communities

The message of Isaiah 58 that we read on Yom Kippur, to make it our priority to do acts of kindness and care for others, rings loudly in our Haftorah. But there are acts of kindness that, carried out however softly in our Legacy communities, resonate just as loudly — in the heavens above us. Isaiah would delight in knowing that the good works many of you perform for those in need, most certainly rise to the attention of God. There is much to herald, much that lives up to the

goodness that is asked of us. There are residents and volunteers who make regular visits to those who live in Memory Care; those who visit the sick; those who make sure that each other knows when to come to Torah study or other events that their friends or neighbors care about; those that look out for the lonely and try to offer companionship; those that take care of each other, by walking the dog when someone's regular routine is disrupted. In fact, I stopped by to visit one of our residents who fell and hurt herself because she was running to do a mitzvah! Let us not run, but let our hearts rejoice in the fact that we will do a mitzvah. Let us give our hearts license to welcome ideas about how to make someone else's life a little sweeter.

see **CLERGY**, p. 10



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