Dear Friends,

Shalom and welcome to the Congregation for Humanistic Judaism’s (CHJ) High Holiday programs. This year, CHJ is once again offering High Holiday programs in a virtual format as we continue to place a priority on the safety of our members and guests.

As the only Humanistic Jewish congregation in Connecticut, CHJ believes it is important to offer our High Holiday programs to the greater community, and at no charge. We know that Humanistic Judaism provides a means for many to connect to a Jewish community in a manner consistent with their personal beliefs and Jewish identity.

Our High Holiday programs are made possible through the financial support of our members and guests, and we gratefully accept contributions to help us defray costs. Donations may be made online via our website, or by sending a check to the address below.

If you are considering joining CHJ, we offer a “New Member” category as well as an “Out-of-Area Member” category, both of which offer substantial benefits at an especially affordable rate. I encourage you to visit CHJ’s website for more information, or to address your questions to membership@humanisticjews.org. And if you are seeking a Jewish education within the context of Humanistic Judaism for your children, please make inquiries to Sundayschool@humanisticjews.org.

In addition to a good year and a sweet year, I especially wish you and those you love a safe and healthy New Year.

Shanah Tovah!

Steven Getz
President, Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

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I. MEMORIAL SERVICE

[Music]

Leader 1: There are strains of music that evoke deep-rooted memories—historic memories from our collective past, personal memories of family and friends now gone, memories of a sweet or bittersweet childhood. The mournful melody draws us within ourselves and back in time. How can we draw solace and strength from our treasured memories? How do we find meaning in life in the face of inevitable death?

Leader 2: The spark of life burns brightly and then…the ineffable silence. No words can fill the void. No pious teachings can compensate for the loss. There is no justice in death. So great is the pain; so unreasonable the emptiness, the dark despair.

Leader 1: Since time immemorial, in every culture, all over the world, people have invented myths to dispel the darkness: myths of heaven, immortality, resurrection. But however we seek to explain it or make it palatable, death comes upon us unawares. We are not prepared to lose those whom we love.

Reader 1: I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground. So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind; Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely. Crowned with lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew, A formula, a phrase remains—but the best is lost. The answer quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love—They are gone.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave, Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind; Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave. I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

(Edna St. Vincent Millay, adapted)
Leader 1: We each live with our memories. We cannot escape them. They grow to be a part of us. Good memories comfort us with pleasant nostalgia. A word, a melody, a flavor or scent can evoke the warmth of family, good times with friends, bright moments of joy. Bad memories assault us with ancient pain and long-ago fears. Times when we were lonely or frightened can rise up to disturb us anew.

Leader 2: It is human to remember. Because we remember, we have culture. Because we remember, we have tradition. Because we remember, we are able to learn from the past and create a better future.

Leader 1: The vocabulary of Jewish life is rich with remembrance. Holidays and festivals commemorate ancient events. The past is treasured as a precious legacy, to be studied and understood, revered and celebrated. Yet this same cherished past includes centuries of persecution, tyranny, and destruction. Ha Shoah, the pivotal event of the last century, was so tragic in its dimensions, so enormous in its cruelty, that some would prefer to bury it beyond recollection. Some would even deny its reality. Today, when we would become at one with our past, we remember Ha Shoah, the Holocaust that engulfed six million of our people and millions of others in a conflagration unprecedented in history.

Let us say together:

Leader 1 & Congregation: We shall not forget, because, we, the living, are all survivors of the Holocaust. We are heirs to the ultimate horror of Ha Shoah.

Leader 2: Neither shall we forget the unspeakable tragedies that continue to unfold, whether on distant shores or closer to home. We mourn the victims of the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. We acknowledge the ravages of climate change, famine, and the displacement of millions of refugees. We pledge to reduce the systemic institutionalized racism that infects every area of American life for Black and Indigenous people and people of color: the inequities in education, healthcare, housing, and voter access; the criminalization of poverty; mass incarceration; and the indiscriminate murder of their loved ones. We must dedicate ourselves to ensuring the value of all humankind.

[Music and Silent Reflection]
Leader 1: There is no adequate memorial for the dead; indeed, memorials are more often for the living. They give us a chance to remember loved ones with unabashed tears. A time to recall a story, repeat a gesture, reaffirm a love.

Parents and peers, family and friends, are forever joined to us by bonds of affection and shared experience. The pain of separation never completely disappears, but neither does the fond memory of their lives. They are constantly with us, even when we do not think of them.

Reader 2: They are not dead who live
In hearts they leave behind.
In those whom they have blessed
They live a life again.
And shall live through the years
Eternal life, and grow
Each day more beautiful
As time declares their good,
Forgets the rest, and proves
Their immortality.

(Hugh Robert Orr, adapted)

Reader 2: Let us say together:
Congregation: The memory of those I loved in life and still love in death blesses my thoughts and my actions. The special grace of their years reaches out to touch my heart and give me hope.

Song Leader
& Congregation: L’dor Vador

We are gifts and we are blessings, we are history in song.
We are hope and we are healing, we are learning to be strong.
We are words and we are stories, we are pictures of the past.
We are carriers of wisdom, not the first and not the last.

L’dor vador, with love eternal
L’dor vador, we protect this chain
From generation to generation
L’dor vador, these hearts will tend the flame. (repeat)

(“From Generation to Generation,” Music and Lyrics, Josh Nelson, adapted)

Leader 1: On this day, when we are flooded with unaccustomed and powerful emotions, let us honor the memory of our loved ones in the way most consistent with our beliefs—and our hearts.

Let us stand if able and together read our Humanistic Remembrance. Then those who wish to recite the traditional Kaddish may do so.
[Please stand]

**Leader 1:**  Those who taught us to laugh and to cry
We remember them.

Those who held us and whom we held
We remember them.

**Leader 2:**  At the rising of the sun and at its going down
We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter
We remember them.

**Leader 1:**  At the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring
At the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer
At the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn
We remember them.

**Leader 2:**  When we are weary and in need of strength
When we are lost and sick at heart
When we face decisions that are difficult to make
We remember them.

When we seek advice that does not come
When we are alone and afraid
When we have joys we yearn to share
We remember them.

**Leader 2:**  Join us as we say:

*So long as we live, they too shall live*
*For they are now a part of us*
*As we remember them.*

*(Rabbis Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer, adapted)*

**Leader 1:**  The traditional Mourners Kaddish, an ancient verse written in Aramaic,
extols the greatness of God and the majesty of creation. As a theological
prayer, its sentiments are inconsistent with our humanistic liturgy.
Nonetheless, for many people the mournful chant evokes thoughts of
loved ones who wished to be remembered and honored in this way.
Please continue to stand while those who wish to recite the Kaddish do so
now.
Mourner’s Kaddish


Ve-eem-roo: A-mayn

Ye-hay shla-ma ra-ba meen sha-ma-ya ve-kha-yeem

Alehn ve-al kol Yis-ra-el ve-eem-roo: A-mayn


[Please be seated]

Leader 1: It is tradition to remember those in our congregation who have passed away since the last High Holidays. This year, sadly, we mourn the loss of two members of our community, Bert Moldow and Robert Windsor.

[Memorials are read]

Leader 2: In ordinary times, we would now invite those who have lost a loved one in the past year to step forward and light a yahrzheit candle. Today we will light a single yahrzheit candle in their memory, and invite you to light one for your loved one at home.

[Leader 2 lights candle]

Leader 2: We now light a memorial candle for all who lost their lives so that others might live in freedom and peace. [Candle is lit]

Song Leader & Congregation: Yesh Koghavim

There are stars up above
So far away we only see their light
Long, long after the star itself is gone.

And so it is with people that we loved,
Their memories keep shining
Ever brightly though their time with us is done.
But the stars that light up the darkest night:
These are the lights that guide us.

As we live our days, these are the ways
We remember, we remember. (repeat)
Yeysh ko·kha·vim  
*She·o·ram ma·gee·ahar·tzah,*  
*Rakka·a·sher*  
*Hematz·mamav-duv·ey·nam.*

Yeysh a-na·sheem she·zeev  
*Mey·eer zikh·ram*  
*Ka·a·sher heym atz-mam ay·nam.*  
*Od b·to·khey·e-e-e·e·ey·nu*

O·rot ey·leh ha·mav·hee·keem  
*B·khesh·kat ha·la·yeel*

*Heym, heym she·mar·eem l·a·dam*  
*Et ha·de·rekh, et ha·de·rekh.* (repeat)

As we live our days, these are the ways  
We remember, we remember. (repeat)

(“There Are Stars,” based on a poem by Hannah Senesh;  
Music & English Lyrics, Jeff Klepper & Daniel Freelander)

**Song Leader:** The sound of your voice, the touch of your hand.  
Memories shared, perhaps in silence.  
These moments I shall remember.

**PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES**

**Leader 1:** At this point in our service it is our practice to pass around a microphone  
so that those who wish may honor the memory of someone dear to them.  
For this virtual service, we have asked you to send your remembrances in advance,  
so that we may voice them for you.

[Remembrances are read]

**Leader 1:** Let us now say together:

**Leader 1 & Congregation:** May our grief for loved ones who are no longer with us lead to an  
expansion of our compassion for all of life and of our passion for wonder  
in our relationships. May we pursue peace among the living. May we find  
inner peace, Shalom, in the acceptance of our loss, cherishing the  
memories of companionship which shall endure. May this community be  
a source of sustenance and support to all who mourn.
[Music and Silent Reading]

In a garden I once heard
A song or an ancient blessing
And above the dark trees
An eternal window is lit
To the memory of the face
That once looked out of it
Which too was in remembrance
Of yet another window lit.

(Yehuda Amichai)

II. CLOSING SERVICE

Leader 2: The day is fading. Soon it will be dark. The silence and peace of night will descend upon the earth. And the tranquility of night will yield to the vitality of day—a new day in a new year. As these hours of reflection and introspection draw to a close, we will return to the tasks and problems, the challenges and the joys, of life.

None of us can know our destiny. Will the year bring health or illness, peace or war, success or failure? Our future is a secret that only time will disclose. Many of the forces that determine our lives are beyond our control.

Leader 1: Yet much of who we are and what we do is ultimately in our hands. We have the freedom and the responsibility to make our own choices in life and to find our own meaning. Philosopher and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl tells us, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing, the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

We can allow ourselves to be buffeted by circumstance and abdicate the responsibility for living. Or we can pursue the adventure of personal fulfillment with all the inner resources at our command.

Leader 2: In this New Year we have the opportunity to begin anew. What does it take for us to grasp it? When Rebbe Nachman, the famed 18th century Chasid, was approached by a young man complaining how hard it was to change his ways, the Rebbe asked, “But do you really want to want?”

Let us “want to want”—to embrace our truest selves, to embrace community, to embrace life, with all its risks and uncertainties.

How often are we given the opportunity for self-renewal—and ignore it?
Reader 3: Sometimes
Out of the corner
Of my eye
I get a glimpse
Of my life.
In a flash
In a moment –
Over there –
I see it clearly.
Quickly then,
I make a shopping list
Or rent a video.
Quickly, I look away.

(Merle Feld)

Leader 2: Yom Kippur is not for looking away. It is for looking inward, for looking at ourselves intensely and acknowledging the most profound truths of our lives. As Humanists, we know that it is up to us to check the recesses of our hearts, to know the true way of moral action by which to judge what we find there, and to act on our own determination without desire for reward or fear of retribution from a supreme being.

Leader 1: This is what we ask of ourselves: to act justly and compassionately and to walk proudly with one another.
Cultivate these qualities in yourself, and they will become real.
Cultivate these in your family, and they will abound.
Cultivate them in your community, and they will grow.

Leader 2: Cultivate them throughout the world, and we will make strides toward world peace. As the Universalist hymn says, "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me."

Song Leader & Congregation: Na-a-se Shalom

Na-a-se sha-lom ba-o-lam
Na-a-se sha-lom a-ley-nu.
V’al kol ha-o-lam
V’im-ru, im ru sha-lom.

Na-a-se sha-lom
Na-a-se sha-lom
Sha-lom a-ley-nu,
V’al kol ha-o-lam.

Na-a-se sha-lom
Na-a-se shal-lom
Sha-lom a-ley-nu,
V’al kol ha-o-lam.

(“Let us bring peace upon ourselves and upon all the world,” Music, Nurit Hirsch)
Our tradition encourages us to change. Indeed, it demands that we strive for our truest selves. In Deuteronomy, we are told, "I have put before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life." (30:19)

Take heed. Choose life! Begin anew!

It is time to embrace change. Change—whether in our families, our workplaces, our communities, our environment, our nation, our world—must begin with ourselves. Let us say together:

We shall not shrink from the task because it seems daunting. It is daunting.
We shall not shrink from the task because we fear failure. We may fail. Success is uncertain. But we must begin.

If I could speak the thin clear vein of thought that is all entwined in webbing left from long lack of honesty, I would speak now, before the sun goes down.

If I could cry the lakes of tears to feed the thirsty nations warring when the world is ripe for working, I would cry now, before the sun goes down.

If I could grow a thousand arms to wind beneath the earth and find a thousand arms to hold dignity, I would grow now, before the sun goes down.

If I could climb a cliff and echo love inside the chasm where bullets echo back at me, I would climb now, before the sun goes down.

If I could know of courage, (the child born from hearing one’s own sound and knowing it to be true), I would know courage now, before the sun goes down.

(Fanchon Shur, adapted)
Leader 2: In the days and weeks ahead, let us strive to live fully and well. Let us not forsake the insights we have struggled to gain during these days of reflection. Soon the Shofar’s call will mark the passing of the old year, and we will prepare to greet the year to come.

Let us be grateful, as we break our Yom Kippur fast, to all who have helped bring food and drink to our table. We vow to respond in turn to those in need.

We celebrate the fruit of the vine and the bounty of nature as we lift this cup. Wine is a symbol of the wholeness of life, reminding us that life is both joy and sorrow. We accept them both, and so, all that life offers.

Leader 1: We celebrate nature, source of all nourishment, Which brings forth bread from the earth.
May we protect the bountiful earth
That it may continue to nurture us.
And let us seek fulfillment
For all who dwell in the world.

Leader 2: In the year to come, may we find strength and serenity, the joy of fulfillment, and the sweetness of love. And let us say together:

Leader 2 & Congregation: May our hearts be open with generosity and our hands ready with kindness. May the day soon come when all humanity walks as one.

Song Leader
& Shofar: T'kee-ah! תקיעה!
She-va-reem! שבעрем!
Te-boo-ah! תרעה!
T'kee-ah G'do-lah! תקיעה גודלה!

Leader 2: L'Shanah Tovah! May we look forward to a year of goodness, joy, health, and sustenance.

Leader 1: For all people of good will, we wish happiness and peace.
L'Shanah Tovah!

As this Yom Kippur day draws to a close, we’d like to sing a song written by John Franklin, one of the founders of our congregation. It’s called “Another Year Begins.” We’ll follow it with “Hevenu Shalom Alechem.”
Another Year Begins

Another year begins
And since we've come this far
Let's take someone else's hand
And do everything we can
To make the most of who we are.

Another year begins
And since we've come this far
Let's take someone else's hand
And do everything we can
To make the most of who we are.

(Music & Lyrics, John Franklin)

Hevenu Shalom Alechem

Hevenu shalom alechem
Hevenu shalom alechem

Hevenu shalom alechem
Hevenu shalom, shalom
Shalom alechem. (repeat all)
(We bring peace to you.)

L'Shanah Tovah!

Wishing you health, happiness and peace in the year to come
In Memoriam

We remember those of our CHJ community who are no longer with us...

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SHOFAR  Hannah Ulman
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TORAH COMMENTARY  David Shafer
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