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Local

Adapting High Holy Days

by Annelise Hanshaw | September 17, 2020 | 0 comment

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September 17, 2020



COURTESY PHOTO

Volunteers assemble gift bags for High Holy Days, the 10 days between the start of the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement. For the first time in Congregation B'nai B'rith's 92-year history, the holy days will be celebrated virtually.

The Jewish New Year begins Friday, also known as Rosh Hashanah. This marks the High Holy Days, or the 10 days bookended by Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This year, Congregation B'nai B'rith had to be creative when planning the celebration.

"We are a house of gathering that's not able to gather anymore," Rabbi Steve Cohen said, noting that synagogue means "house of gathering." "So we've had to learn how to be a house of gathering by using every resource at our disposal."

He hopes that the community feel is not lost because members can't physically congregate. The staff has been trying to stay in touch with members through phone calls and gift baskets.

"During a situation like this, it has really brought up a spirit of volunteerism and a desire to work together, to stay strong together," Rabbi Cohen said. "And to particularly reach out to members that are isolated, living alone or at risk for COVID."

A staff of volunteers assembled over 600 gift bags and delivered them by hand. Inside, members will find Shabbat candles, prayer booklets, honey sticks and apples for a sweet new year.

One of the biggest hurdles was finding a safe way to have the choir perform. Choir members recorded themselves individually and are using software to combine the voices.

For an in-person experience, Rabbi Cohen and Assistant Rabbi David Brenner will take appointments for individuals and families to have prayer and reflection time in front of the ark, which holds the Torah scrolls.

There will be online services at 7:30 p.m. Friday and 10:30 a.m. Saturday for Rosh Hashanah. Then, the congregation will hold a Kol Nidre (which means "all vows") service at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 27. The celebration for Yom Kippur (or the Day of Atonement) is planned for 10:30 a.m. Sept. 28.

For more information on the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services and programs, visit www.cbbsb.org.

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