

If you are interested in participating in the new activity described below, please RSVP by July 16th, and include your preference for Monday or Wednesday as a meeting day, and your preference for afternoon or evening on one of those two days.

RSVP to: anti-racist@bethisrael-pdx.org

Dear Friends,

We are writing to invite you to share in forming a group we are terming a "Sacred Circle." We envision our group's purpose to be to provide one another support, and accountability as we collectively determine our group's way into more courageous and concrete action for racial and immigrant justice, and beyond. Here are couple of words of background, and please bear with us.

Phil Shane, is my fellow facilitator and fellow Congregation Beth Israel congregant. We are both members of our temple's Social Action and Immigrant/Refugee subcommittees, and so subsequently we both opted to attend a virtual class given by IMLrJ, or Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice, located here in Portland. IMLrJ sponsored the course of several weeks duration, designed to inform participants on how to counter White Nationalism in the PNW. The class, which concluded just before the murder of George Floyd, was extremely well conceived, and included informative speakers such as Western States director Eric Ward. Around 100 people from a large cross section of faith communities as well as unaffiliated people (an IMLrJ staffer terms these folks as "Fierce Lovers of Justice"), took the class. Many of us were able to get to know one another via breakout sessions, and our passion, frustration and desire to find action oriented goals was palpable.

As a result, staff at IMLrJ anticipated that the subsequent events would only increase the need many of us feel to become better organized, and to have a place for like-minded people to come together to establish and carry out plans of action. And so they conceived, and offered to assist, groups of 7 to 15 participants to organize into Sacred Circles. Here are a few words in their invitation to those of us who attended the class: "We are in a movement moment - a whirlwind - like many of us have not seen in decades, or a lifetime. With the confluence of a global pandemic and the Black Lives Matter uprising, compounded by the upcoming election, a rising white nationalist movement and the Supreme Court DACA decision on the horizon, now is the time to go all in."

And so, if you would be interested in coming together to support one another and achieve some concrete goals, here is the plan: We meet virtually at least once a month, or more ... it's up to us. We learn and discuss, plan and achieve goals. Phil and I will be doing administrative duties, such as setting up zoom details, sending summaries of meetings and reminders of upcoming sessions. We will provide structure for the meeting format (introductions, eg), and remain in touch with IMLrJ about upcoming learning/action opportunities and campaigns. IMLrJ is extremely well connected with a variety of social action organizations in the region, and has years of organizing experience to offer.

What the cohosts won't be doing is any deciding. The idea is that each Circle is an independent entity and will determine its own goals. Obviously these can include any number of possibilities; the range includes the liberation of Black people, the freedom and safety of immigrants, and voter suppression. Local and /or national elections, and so many other areas of our interest and passion are on the table. We can educate ourselves, letter write, or lobby. Obviously we know that you might very well have much more knowledge and strong areas of interest than we facilitators.

So that's the proposal and the purpose of this tome! If you'd like to try this out with some other committed friends just answer this email with your preferred days and times to meet.

We'll ask you to fill out a brief IMIrJ registration, and do our best to get us off to a successful and gratifying start. Our kick off gathering will be to decide "Who Do We Want to Be?"

Best to you all, and best wishes for an uplifting experience,

Vicki Lachmann, Phil Shane