



Open Letters to Community Members

Below are seven samples of open letters to community members from Federations. Please feel free to use the language and/or strategies you see here in your community.

Chicago AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR JEWISH COMMUNITY

This is not a fundraising letter – it is an update to keep you informed on how JUF is addressing the pandemic on behalf of our community.

These are uncertain, challenging times for the world, our country, Israel and our community.

Your JUF will fulfill the mandate of “*kol yisrael arevim zeh b'zeh*” (all of Israel are responsible for one another). Our shared Jewish values provide a roadmap for weathering this coronavirus storm. As always, we translate those values into actions that define us: saving lives, caring for the sick and performing acts of loving kindness.

Obviously, it is not business as usual. JUF, like others, has cancelled public events. But we remain very much open for business to help the hungry, the sick and others at-risk.

The stock market's decline has shaken many. Combined with other economic displacements, we are anticipating a dramatic increase in requests for emergency cash assistance for medications, rent, utilities, food and other essentials.

JUF STANDS READY TO HELP.





Chicago
continued

Powered by a strong community-wide annual campaign built precisely for moments such as these, JUF already has:

- **Provided over \$1 million in cash advances** to our local agencies;
- **Established a pool of additional funds** to specifically address coronavirus-related organizational expenses;
- **Launched a new volunteer database** for those in low risk categories looking to lend a hand, and;
- **Coordinated agency planning** to provide integrated human service responses.

If someone you know needs a connection to social services, please have them call: 855-ASK-JCFS (855-275-5237).

Entrusted with the sacred stewardship of communal *tzedakah*, we have obligations to donors, the agencies we fund and those they serve. In this environment all nonprofits have concerns about lost revenue, raising funds, and making payroll.

The community has confronted many challenges. Our organizations are resilient. We have never failed to marshal the resources to do what is needed. We will do so again now.

Even as we no longer gather during this pandemic as a community at synagogues, JCCs, Hillels and other venues, we will continue coming together in other critical ways, providing support to each other and for the vital organizations and synagogues that give so much life to this lively community.

Yes, these are uncertain, challenging times. What is certain is that – together – we will meet the challenge. We will keep you apprised of communal needs, the ways we are helping and how you can, too.





Columbus These are uncertain, unprecedented and highly challenging times for our community, our country, Israel and the world.

An intrinsic part of JewishColumbus' core mission is, "Kol Yisrael arevim zeh b'zeh" (all of Israel are responsible for one another). Our shared Jewish values provide a roadmap for weathering this storm, and we will translate those values into community-defining actions: **saving lives, caring for the sick and performing acts of kindness.**

While JewishColumbus follows the guidelines to maximize public health and safety by canceling public events, we remain very much open for business. Our job to help those in need during a time of great existential and economic insecurity.

JewishColumbus stands ready to help in any way that we can.

Because of your on-going generous donations to the JewishColumbus Annual Campaign, **we have been able to respond immediately** by taking the following actions:

- We created a **Medical Taskforce** of community experts to help advise our agencies and congregations on best health practices
- We established the **JewishColumbus Community Response Fund** to help those with the most urgent needs
- We **assessed the need** with help from partner agencies to provide an integrated response
- We provided **four weeks of meals** to community members in needs by allocating funds to the JCC; we have already delivered 2200+ meals!
- We ensured **Kosher for Passover** food by allocating funds so those with significant income-loss, who require Kosher for Passover food, can receive food cooked at Beth Jacob for a plentiful Seder



Columbus *continued*

- We continue to **provide security** for our Jewish institutions

In the coming days and months ahead, our Jewish Needs Cabinet will continue to allocate funds to our Jewish agencies so we can help as many people as possible.

If you know someone in need of a connection to social services, please have them contact our partners at Jewish Family Services: (614) 231-1890 or accesspoint@jfscolumbus.org.

The Columbus Jewish community has confronted many challenges, but we are resilient. We have never failed to marshal resources to do what is needed, and we will not fail now.

Even though our usual way of gathering has changed, we will continue coming together in other critical ways, providing support to each other and for the vital organizations and synagogues that give so much life to our vibrant community.

Together, we need to stand firm and resolute in the weeks and months to come.

We will keep you apprised of communal needs and the ways we are helping and how you can as well.





Kansas City

In this time of uncertainty and anxiety, let us reassure you that we are here for you. Each and every one of you are at the front of our minds. We care for you, and as lonely as the circumstances may have you feeling, **please know that you are not alone.**

Federation, in partnership with our community, does so much to keep our people, culture, traditions and togetherness intact. **We take pride in caring for our most vulnerable**, from aged Holocaust survivors to those with disabilities and/or chronic financial challenges. We offer and support programs—like the Chesed Fund, older adult care management, Keshet KC and Kasher Meals on Wheels—that ensure financial stability, dignity and the very opposite of social distancing, and our partners have the flexibility to adapt services to keep connected with those who need connection even more in the time of coronavirus.

All of these vital programs and services must and will continue, which is why Jewish Federation is working collaboratively with the Jewish Community Foundation and Menorah Heritage Foundation, as well as all partner agencies and congregations, to plan through—and beyond—the current crisis.

We will continue to communicate about the steps we are taking as the central convener—like creating a **Coronavirus Emergency Relief Fund**—to ensure that we are serving our community and meeting its needs. One example of this is making outreach calls and offering virtual gatherings and discussions to stay connected. Don't be surprised if next week you hear directly from a member of our staff or get invited to join a discussion about a Jewish podcast or about something happening in Israel.

And please, **reach out to us if you, or someone you know, need support**—be it food assistance, financial support, emotional support or virtual social support. Being there for each other is what community is all about.





**Kansas
City**
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Finally, please use our email communications as a resource for finding other connections to Jewish life and outlets for yourself and your family—some of the organizations we support locally and nationally have amazing virtual offerings, from PJ Library to BBYO and Hillel. If you've missed any of these links, let us know and we'll quickly send them your way again.

What we know for sure is that things will continue to change. We will be in touch again not only next week, but throughout the weeks to come in order to keep our community connected. Meanwhile, **we wish you a true “Shabbat Shalom”—a Shabbat filled with peace, even in the eye of uncertainty.**





Milwaukee Dear Friend of the Jewish Community Foundation,

We hope this note finds you and your family well as you navigate the unique challenges associated with the COVID-19 crisis. We are living in extraordinary times and we know you are deeply concerned and uncertain about the challenges that lie ahead. We share your concerns and we're here to help in any way we can.

Throughout our history, in times of crisis, we have always answered the call to help those in need. The Milwaukee Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Foundation have consistently responded to **Be Here** for the community. We have been here and will continue to be here to care for the needs of the Jewish people and build a vibrant Jewish future in Milwaukee, Israel and around the world.

Today, we find ourselves once again responding to help our agencies and community members through this unprecedented crisis. **To that end, we want to assure you that the Jewish Community Foundation is open and operational – we are responding to the wishes of our fund holders and we are continuing to send out grant checks to charities that need funds now more than ever. Please do not hesitate to help respond to the needs and feel free to contact us with any questions.**

The Milwaukee Jewish Federation will be launching a special fundraising effort to respond to the crisis as it relates to the Milwaukee Jewish Community. We know the needs will be great. At this time, we are working with our agencies to determine the needs and will provide you with details in the coming days.

As members of the Jewish community, you can feel confident that you are a part of an organization that is at the forefront of helping those in need. We are deeply grateful to you for your support and partnership.

All the best to you and your family during this difficult time.





New York Another week has passed under the draining reality of this new normal, with needs escalating dramatically among the most vulnerable. More families are dealing with illness and some have been devastated by loss. Our hearts go out to every one of them.

This may be the most harrowing crisis our community has ever faced. But the burden is shared by every one of us -- together. We've all been touched to hear accounts of the heroism of those working around the clock caring for the sick, those making sure the elderly and other at-risk groups get the help they can't live without, and those stepping up to generously address pressing needs.

Last week, UJA authorized more than \$23 million in emergency funding for social service agencies, and we're hoping early next week to authorize initial funding for our Jewish communal institutions, including community centers. We know that this is still just the beginning, and that we'll need to provide significant additional support as the challenges intensify across our community.

Our agencies have impressively pivoted to address emerging needs. Already many JCCs in our network have become designated childcare centers for some front-line workers. Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty is dramatically increasing its food delivery. This week, the agency is in the middle of its Passover distribution, which -- with support from our emergency grant -- will provide two million pounds of food to 129 sites serving more than 200,000 low-income New Yorkers. DOROT, Selfhelp Community Services, and the 92nd Street Y are among the agencies expanding their existing virtual connections to reach out to isolated seniors, including Holocaust survivors. And across our network there are home health aides, child welfare workers, disability providers, educators, senior center staff, food pantry workers and volunteers, mental health providers, and case managers who are among our community's unsung champions.

Israel, also shut down by the pandemic, has not shut its doors. Our largest overseas partner, the Jewish Agency, welcomed 880 new





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olim since the crisis began, most recently 72 from Ethiopia. Nothing stands in the way of some dreams. And our partner JDC is working with the government to help facilitate regular food delivery to 60,000 homebound elderly.

It's the inspiring work of our network of nonprofits, both local and global, that demonstrates the power of UJA-Federation, and what we make possible day in and day out -- but particularly at moments of crisis like this.

In the almost six years that I've been writing these messages, I've tried to share as many of these stories as I can, hoping to give all of you a glimpse into our nonprofit partners on the ground and the people whose lives we've changed in ways large and small. Who, what, where, and why has always been the focus. What I much less frequently write about is the *how*.

The *how*, of course, is our annual campaign. It's no secret that our annual campaign has built UJA -- and UJA was built for this moment. Because of the annual campaign, we've been able to sustain and strengthen our community's infrastructure -- the interconnected agencies that run the gamut of social services and Jewish life programming -- which is how we're able to address challenges quickly and strategically.

Never has our annual campaign been more important than right now. And our inability to hold in-person fundraising events for the rest of our fiscal year, coupled with the softening of the market, will result in a dramatic shortfall in the dollars we need to sustain our unparalleled network of nonprofits at this critical time.

So for the first time in a Friday message, I'm not just sharing stories or updates -- **I'm asking everyone to contribute as generously as you can.** If you have the capacity to give, this is the moment.

Yesterday was *Rosh Chodesh*, the first day of the Hebrew month of Nissan, when we celebrate Passover, and the coming of spring and a





New York
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time of freedom. We recite a prayer for the new month in the morning service, which I've recited many times before, but it had different resonance for me yesterday. We ask God that the month ahead be one of blessings and say:

Vayihi rosh hachodesh hazeh sof v'ketz l'chol tzaroteinu, tchila v'rosh l'pidyon nafsheinu -- May this beginning of the month mark the end of all our sorrows, and the beginning of redemption of the spirit.

My wish for us all is that we'll see, in this month or the near future, the end of this pandemic and pain. And that with the coming of Passover and spring, we'll have renewed health and calm in our community, and throughout the world.

Shabbat Shalom.





Palm Beach County

In a time when we're hearing about businesses all over our community and the country being closed down, I want to make sure you know we are here for you.

Although the offices of Federation and our partner agencies have closed, it does not mean our Jewish community is closed. If anything, we are working more closely than ever with our partner agencies and synagogues to ensure that we continue to bring Jewish Palm Beach together.

In the coming weeks, look to this space to meet the Jewish heroes of our community: those on the front lines who are bringing Jewish life to you in new and innovative ways. Today, I'd like to introduce you to Amy Bergman, Kayla Cove and John Knight.

Amy is Federation's Director of Outreach and Engagement. Every morning on **Facebook** and **Instagram**, she is providing resources for families to use throughout the day. She shares a daily schedule of local and not-so-local online experiences including read-aloud stories from PJ Library, virtual field trips, craft projects, author chats and cooking ideas. She also provides a connection to local Jewish organizations and synagogues. Today, for example, she shared a LIVE virtual Tot Shabbat with Cantor Alicia Stillman from Temple Judea and a Virtual Family Shabbat offered by the Mandel JCC.

Parents, you can also turn to Amy as a resource. She is giving you information about how to talk to your kids about Coronavirus, what you can do with them while you're home together and how to take care of yourself during these unsettling times. And if you want to connect with her directly, she welcomes you to send her a private message through Facebook.

Kayla and John are teachers in the Mandel JCC's Preschool Plus Program, which is designed for children aged 3-5 who have been diagnosed with special needs or are going through the evaluation process, and who need more support than a traditional preschool class





**Palm
Beach
County**
continued

offers. Yesterday, they launched a daily interactive online program through Zoom that allows them to directly interact with the class.

The morning session will include Circle Time, which includes songs and lessons. Next week, the group will be focused on Passover so they can learn about the upcoming holiday. In the evenings, around 5 p.m., Cayla and John will once again connect online with the kids for Good Night Story Time.

If you have a child with special needs and are looking for enrichment, [click here](#) to email Johnathan Kabot, Mandel JCC's Director of Special Needs.

I'm thrilled to hear that our community is using these incredible resources to stay connected to Jewish life, and I look forward to continuing to share the stories of more of our Jewish heroes.

As we welcome Shabbat, we are reminded once again to keep our local and global Jewish community in our thoughts. I wish you and your family good health and Shabbat shalom.





Pittsburgh We hope you remain healthy and safe during this very challenging time.

Thanks to your support, the Jewish Federation has been able to respond quickly to the coronavirus pandemic. As events are evolving rapidly, we want to update you on important new actions the Jewish Federation is taking to help Jewish Pittsburgh navigate this unprecedented crisis.

Last night, our board of directors approved approximately \$250,000 of grants for coronavirus relief. A board appointed committee of volunteers and staff allocated this money to address immediate needs for medical supplies, food insecurity relief, financial relief and additional staffing at our agencies here, in Israel and in Jewish communities worldwide. Hundreds of thousands of additional dollars will be available to address emerging needs in the coming months.

All of these efforts are possible in large part because of your support of the Jewish Federation's Community Campaign. We must reach our Campaign goal of \$14 million this year and urge you to give generously. A record-breaking Campaign will go far in addressing the unprecedented needs in our community.

Four additional ways your generous support has enabled the Jewish Federation to build community resilience and help those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic include:

1. **Mobilizing our community to help the vulnerable.** This week, Jewish Federation funded a new hotline together with Jewish Family & Community Services (JFCS) to direct people with crisis-related needs to resources that can help. Through e-mail and webinars from infectious disease experts, labor lawyers and many others, the Jewish Federation has provided insights and shared resources among Jewish agencies so they can continue to serve both their regular clients and the influx of new people affected by the pandemic.
2. **Strengthening our agencies that support people in need.** Through our network of local volunteers and our national organization JFNA,





Pittsburgh continued

Jewish Federation is helping Jewish agencies to apply for relief under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that the U.S. Congress recently passed. We have also converted some program-specific grants to unrestricted grants for agencies including the Jewish Community Center (JCC) to give them the flexibility to redirect funds where they are needed most.

3. **Supporting Jewish institutions across our city.** In recent weeks, our planning experts have worked directly with our day schools, synagogues, and other Jewish institutions to gauge where they have the greatest need. While many have cancelled or shifted to virtual activities, regular updates from the Jewish Federation have helped these agencies navigate their staffing, financial, health and safety challenges. Jewish Federation's Jewish community security program has also taken advantage of empty buildings to accelerate implementation of the BluePoint alert system that will immediately inform law enforcement and other Jewish organizations about critical security incidents.
4. **Keeping our community connected.** As much of Jewish life revolves around community gatherings, the Jewish Federation has developed virtual learning and community opportunities to enable people to stay engaged. From classes by Jewish Community Foundation's Rabbi Danny Schiff to young adult gatherings to the upcoming worldwide celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, Israel's independence day, we continue to develop new offerings that will keep us connected and mentally healthy.

While we have shifted to work remotely, we continue to operate at full capacity to deliver the services our community needs. During a crisis like this one, the Jewish Federation's role as a vital community resource becomes crystal clear. We can make an impact due to our ability to mobilize quickly in response to new challenges, and our capacity to assess and to address the most important needs right now.

Wishing you and your loved ones good health at this challenging time.





Portland Shalom Chaverim (Dear Friends),

It's hard to believe that two weeks ago we were debating whether to cancel large events, and last week we were deciding whether and when to move to working remotely. Today, we've seen large-scale responses from the federal and state government, significant restrictions on public life, and a general sense that we're going to be hunkered down in our homes for the foreseeable future. Reality as we know it has changed and we are just beginning to feel the impact of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) on our health and well-being, our economy, and our world. I wrote last week to inform you of how CJP had begun to respond to this crisis and there is so much more to share just one week later.

CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY FUND UPDATE

Last Sunday, we opened the **CJP Coronavirus Emergency Fund** and, as of this morning, we have raised \$707,000 from nearly 190 donors. Yesterday, we approved the release of the first \$200,000 to meet urgent needs, including: critical support for seniors, access and distribution of food, direct services for vulnerable populations, technology to support people who are socially isolated, and essential food and supplies for the upcoming Passover holiday. **You can find an up-to-date list of grantees on [JewishBoston.com](https://www.jewishboston.com).**

CJP WARMLINE

On Tuesday, we sent a community-wide email inviting individuals in need of support or facing financial hardship to call the **CJP Warmline**, a service that connects people to assistance across a variety of organizations. We'll also promote the Warmline in local Jewish newspapers, through outreach to partner organizations, and by individual follow-up to ensure that people know about this critical resource. This is our most direct and effective way to ensure that anyone in need does not fall through the cracks, and I encourage you to post and share this communal resource widely.





Portland continued

CREATIVE APPROACHES TO JEWISH LIFE

While we are focused on supporting vulnerable populations, **connection, joy, and Jewish life must go on.** During this time of social distancing, people are hungry for connection, and people and organizations are responding. Remote learning in Jewish day schools and synagogues is up and running. Many of us have already attended virtual Shabbat services, learning webinars, and other new opportunities — in Boston, Haifa, and around the world. From challah-baking classes to sing-alongs, and from lectures to tot shabbat services, social distancing has already unleashed a spirit of creativity and community that has the potential to accelerate new and innovative approaches to Jewish life, learning, and identity.

In the coming weeks, CJP will work with our partners to ensure that there are opportunities for everyone to feel engaged. The **JewishBoston.com** team is curating the incredible opportunities being offered throughout the community. This is a great time to **connect or reconnect with a synagogue, to find a learning opportunity, to explore new ways to “do Judaism” in your home.** In anticipation of Passover, CJP hopes to enable everyone to have a seder, especially those who will not be able to celebrate as usual this year. More information will be available soon.

Last week, CJP staff and volunteers came together for a **virtual candle lighting**, and we will gather again tonight at 6:30 p.m. for a new tradition we’re calling “CJP Friday Night Lights.” If you’re not already participating in another Shabbat experience, you are welcome to **join in** and share with anyone who might be interested in welcoming Shabbat. I hope to see some of you there!

A FEW WORDS OF TORAH: “ENOUGH AND MORE”

There is a moment in this week’s Torah portion that reflects what I am seeing from our community right now. As we conclude the book of Exodus, Moses repeats to the Israelites the detailed instructions for the building of the *mishkan* (tabernacle).

The Torah describes an outpouring of generosity from the “willing of





Portland continued

heart.” The text says that the people brought “enough materials for all the work to be done, *and more*.” This is confusing: Did they bring enough (i.e. the right amount) or did they bring more than necessary?

The answer might be both, and this might be teaching us something about the nature of a community’s sacred work, whether building a tabernacle or facing an unprecedented crisis. Bringing enough, or just the right amount, represents the need for guidelines, boundaries, and instructions. Clearly defined problems, solutions, and processes ensure that our work is done as effectively and efficiently as possible. This is true for communal efforts and for individuals; we need routines, boundaries, and structures to be effective and to sustain ourselves.

At the same time, the willing of heart want to respond with an overflow of generosity, dedication, and passion. Bringing more represents the spirit and urgency with which so many of us want to give, respond, and act.

Such is the nature of *abundant generosity*. We need to be intentional, analytical, and systematic. Yet, in the face of adversity, we also go beyond what seems reasonable or possible. In times of crisis, we can dig deeper, go farther; we can experience, create, and realize more.

Over this past week, that is precisely what I’ve been seeing — from colleagues and volunteers, from leaders across the community, and from the hundreds of individuals who are writing, calling, adapting, creating, and giving. All this in order to meet the most pressing needs of those who are vulnerable and at risk, and in order to ensure that Jewish life and community will go on and we will discover new ways to thrive.

THE WORK GOES ON

This is a time of great uncertainty. The challenges we face from this crisis are evolving and unprecedented. And, as one of our community rabbis reminded his congregation last week, “*character is formed and revealed in the face of adversity*.” This is true for individuals and it is true for a community. I know that ours is one that, like the Israelites in the wilderness, will continue to face this challenge with enough, and more.





Toronto

We hope you are healthy and doing well during this very challenging time.

As a valued UJA donor, you have chosen to invest in strengthening our community. As events are rapidly evolving, we wanted to update you on all that UJA is doing to help our community navigate this unprecedented crisis.

Our entire community, along with much of the world, has been impacted by the pandemic. Jewish day schools have cancelled in-person classes and shifted to online learning. Our JCCs have closed. Many synagogues have cancelled in-person services. Here at UJA, we have cancelled all events, our Shinshinim have returned to Israel, and our staff are working remotely.

While the way we work has changed, we continue to operate at full capacity to deliver the services our community needs. Indeed, it is precisely during a crisis like this one that UJA's role as a vital community resource becomes crystal clear. UJA's extensive reach through our network of agencies, our ability to quickly mobilize in response to new challenges, and our large-scale capacity to address the comprehensive needs of our community uniquely position us to make an impact.

Here are five ways your generous support is enabling UJA to build community resilience and help those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. **Mobilizing our community to help the vulnerable.** We have expanded our annual Global Seder to include a significant investment in helping at-risk individuals and families in our community to get through the pandemic safely – before, during, and after Passover. We are getting ready to deliver supplies to those who are now living in isolation, either lacking the means to access groceries and medicine or facing greater vulnerability due to their age or health. We are launching a proactive telephone outreach program to check in on community members and identify those who may need help. We are also working on setting up a hotline through which community





Toronto continued

members can request assistance. We are awed by the extraordinary response to UJA's call-to-action, which has already mobilized well over 200 donors and nearly 300 volunteers. **If you or someone you know needs help, please email [Ryla atrbraemer@ujafed.org](mailto:Ryla.atrbraemer@ujafed.org).**

2. **Strengthening our agencies that support the most vulnerable.** Our network of social service agencies is on the front lines of helping our community's most vulnerable overcome this crisis. Recognizing the tremendous pressure their teams will be under in the coming weeks, we have prepaid our allocations to partner agencies for the month of April to ensure they have the resources they need. As the pandemic evolves, we are prepared to continue doing this in the months ahead, so that our agencies have the stable funding necessary to focus on their core responsibility: helping those in need.
3. **Supporting Jewish institutions across our city.** In recent weeks, day schools, synagogues, and other Jewish institutions have been reaching out to us for guidance on appropriate health precautions. While encouraging institutions to connect directly with Toronto Public Health, we have been issuing **regular updates to more than 130 institutions throughout the community**, sharing best practices to facilitate a community-wide approach. While many institutions have cancelled or shifted to virtual activities over the past few days, these updates helped many navigate this challenge in recent weeks.
4. **Keeping our community connected.** So much of Jewish life revolves around gathering as a community. That sense of connection will be severely tested in the coming weeks, which is why we are developing webinar opportunities to enable community members to stay engaged. Our hope is that, with so many wisely staying at home, we can use technology to counter the psychological isolation that risks going hand-in-hand with physical separation. More details to come.
5. **Planning for our community's evolving needs, now and for the long-term.** As a hub for more than 100 agencies and organizations, UJA serves as the backbone of our community and has a unique





Toronto *continued*

vantage point. We are in ongoing communication with leaders in every sector of Jewish life in our city to determine the impact this crisis is having throughout our community. Our goal is to ensure we have a coordinated response not only to meeting the comprehensive needs of our community today, but ensuring we have an effective strategy for coming through this crisis with strength.

Many have asked us: **What can I do to help community members in need during the pandemic?** As a UJA donor, you have already done so much. UJA would not be able to respond to this crisis in a comprehensive way without your generosity. **On behalf of our entire community: thank you.**

If you are interested in volunteering to help vulnerable community members access groceries or other essentials, or if you would like to make a gift to our expanded Global Seder, **more details may be found here.** If you have ideas for how UJA can help our community get through this crisis, please do not hesitate to **connect with us.**

Wishing you and your loved ones good health at this challenging time.

