To Our Dear Friends,

As we approach the New Year, we are aware that this year's season of holidays — from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, and then Sukkot and Simchat Torah — will be drastically different for all of us. For reasons of safety related to the pandemic, many of us will shelter alone in our homes instead of gathering in synagogues for services, and many of us will be apart from our extended families. And still, we will celebrate the beginning of the New Year, 5781, and share our prayers for good health, much sweetness and lasting peace for all of humanity.

The holidays are a time of renewal and optimism that the coming days will be better, and that we will have the opportunity to better our own lives and our world.

We know that these last months have been challenging; many people have faced health issues, isolation, sadness and loss. We at the Claims Conference continue to emphasize that we can get through this together. Always, we appreciate your resilience and strength, which are especially inspiring at this time of year. You teach us so much, by the example of your lives.

We renew our commitment to you, to ensure that the delivery of critical services and compensation will be preserved. Please do not hesitate to contact your local agencies (see the list on page 6) if you need help.

In these pages we offer practical and spiritual suggestions, based on the advice of professionals, for making the holidays meaningful, for reflecting on traditions and for staying healthy.

On behalf of the Claims Conference community — our lay leaders and staff, as well as our extended family of social workers, care managers, home care workers and volunteers — we send our heartfelt best wishes for a shana tova u’metuka, a sweet New Year, filled with many blessings.

As always,

Gideon Taylor
President,
Claims Conference

Greg Schneider
Executive Vice President,
Claims Conference
The beautiful, awe-inspiring High Holidays are a time of remembrance and celebration, the sounds of the shofar and the sweetness of honey cake.

It’s also a time to reflect upon this past year and its challenges — and how we have made it through together — and to look toward a brighter future. We have the opportunity to begin anew.

This holiday may not feel as isolated as last Passover did — when many families were only able to gather remotely via zoom because of the pandemic — but many facilities, synagogues and community centers that usually host services and holiday meals are still not able to do so. For those who follow the tradition of visiting cemeteries at this time of year, Covid-19 restrictions may make things more difficult. But rabbis, social workers and communal leaders agree that in this very different year, there are many opportunities to mark the holidays and New Year. Be kind to yourself and find traditions that have meaning for you. Listen to the music of the holidays at home and sing along, even if only your heart can hear.

Rabbi Stephanie Dickstein, LMSG, who serves as chaplain for the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest’s Seniors at Home program, is finding that many of the clients she visits (virtually, these days, with a few distanced in-person visits) are becoming more and more comfortable with technology, and are now able to do things they weren’t able to do previously.

For those comfortable using technology on the holidays, Rabbi Dickstein says there are many options for viewing synagogue services via livestream, or listening to music that might be comforting — many people may still have records or taped recordings of hazzanut, cantorial music, or they can find music, like Richard Tucker chanting Kol Nidrei, on YouTube. She notes that those who are not yet comfortable with the technology can get help from their agencies or from relatives. Those who don’t want to use technology on the holiday might want to watch pre-recorded services, either before or after the holiday.

“One of the things I find among survivors is that many of them are having a very hard time, several months into the pandemic,” Rabbi Dickstein says. “Some say, ‘I survived Auschwitz and now I can’t go out of my house.’ The longer this goes on, the more of a theological crisis evolves.”

“Where do we find hope?” she continues, “Some of it is in their own stories, some of it is in the idea of continuity. Many of my clients are comfortable with the fact that they are not going to live forever, and for many, the questions of life and death are very strong at this time of year. It’s helpful to be open to talking about what mortality means. We find hope in not denying what is difficult and challenging.”

She explains that others might say, “What will be, will be. This is in God’s hands,” and that saying so helps them relax a little. That too, she says, is good to talk openly about.

“And it’s good to talk about what is sweet. Honey is a symbol of this season. It’s not simple — it comes from a non-kosher insect; the people who try to harvest it can get stung; we ‘steal’ it from the bees. We have to ask, ‘How do we get sweetness out of that which is difficult? How can we transform what is difficult into something sweet?’

“We Jews always have hope,” she adds. “Whether you are religious or not, whether you are a believer or not, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur inevitably make us think about life and death,” says Dr. Eva Fogelman, an author, filmmaker and psychologist who works with many Holocaust survivors and has pioneered therapeutic treatment for survivors and their descendants.

“It is also a time we reflect on what we have accomplished in life and what regrets we are carrying, and we remember all our loved ones who were murdered in the Holocaust and the others we have lost more recently,” she says. “We each have the capacity to focus our thoughts on the good we have done in our lifetime, and not to dwell on our disappointments.”

Dr. Fogelman also has very practical suggestions, for those who are spending the holidays alone. “Set the table with a beautiful tablecloth, maybe flowers. Try to have...”

Continued on page 5
How to Protect Yourself and Others

TAKE EVERYDAY PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS

- Wash your hands frequently, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds. (If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. The FDA warns against using products with 1-propanol or methanol.)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- If you attend activities, the safest ones are those held outside.
- Avoid contact with others who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Wear a mask when you go out in public and around people who don’t live in your household.
- If you have a fever, cough or other symptoms, you might have COVID-19. If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider. If you have an emergency warning sign (including trouble breathing), get emergency medical care immediately.

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

КАК ЗАЩИТИТЬ СЕБЯ И ДРУГИХ

ЕЖЕДНЕВНО ПРИНИМАЙТЕ ПРОФИЛАКТИЧЕСКИЕ МЕРЫ

- Часто мойте руки водой и мылом как минимум 20 секунд. Если вода и мыло недоступны, очищайте руки санитайзером, содержащим как минимум 60% алкоголя. FDA не рекомендует использование продукции, содержащей 1-пропанол и метанол.
- Не трогайте глаза, нос и рот немытыми руками.
- Соблюдайте дистанцию в 6 футов (приблизительно две вытянутые руки) с другими людьми.
- Оставайтесь дома, если вы заболевели.

The annual life certificate process for Article 2 pension recipients typically starts in April. To be as cautious as possible, during the pandemic, the mailing has been postponed. Of course, payments continue at the beginning of each quarter. This life certificate process will begin during the first 2 weeks of September 2020. If you do not receive your life certificate in the mail by September 30, 2020, please contact us at (646) 536-9100 / Email: Info@claimscon.org
PARSNIP SOUP
Makes 8 - 10 servings.

I have recently discovered parsnip, a neglected vegetable which is full of nutrients and has a touch of sweetness. This soup is easy to prepare. It's creamy without any addition of cream, and it also freezes very well. I like to serve it warm or cold.

INGREDIENTS:
3 shallots
2 cloves garlic
3 leeks
2 tablespoons parsnips
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
7 cups vegetable broth
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Parsley for garnish

PREPARATION:
Peel the shallots and slice. Peel the garlic and slice. Cut off and discard the roots and tough dark green leaves of the leeks. Cut the white part into thin slices. Place in a sieve and rinse thoroughly under cold running water to remove any sand. Peel the parsnip, trim the ends and slice thickly.

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan. Add the shallots, garlic and leeks. Sauté over low heat for a minute. Add parsnips and 6 1/2 cups of the vegetable broth. Bring to a boil over high heat. Then lower the heat and cook, covered, for about 25 minutes or until the parsnips are tender.

Remove the chicken to a carving board and let it rest for 15 minutes before carving.

To test for doneness, pierce the leg joint with the tip of a knife, the juices, should run clear, not pink.

Remove the chicken to a carving board and let it rest for 15 minutes before carving.

While the chicken is resting, prepare the pan drippings. Discard all of the particles from the cavity. Tilt the chicken so that all the juices will pour into a small pan. Also when carving the chicken, collect all of the juices released from the bird and add to the pan juices. Place the juices in the freezer for a short while to allow the fat to rise to the top. Discard the fat. Heat the juices and pour over the chicken if you like.

Cool the soup a little. Puree in a blender, in batches, until very smooth.

Return the soup to the saucepan and adjust the consistency as needed with the reserved 1/2 cup of broth. Season to taste.

Please enjoy these recipes for delicious and healthy special dishes for the holidays. While you might be serving a meal for just one or two, you can freeze leftovers in small portions for future use (and save yourself trips to the store or time waiting for deliveries) and keep enjoying them.

For those who can't cook, we don't want you to miss out on celebrating the holidays; please be in touch with your local agency (see page 6) to inquire about the possibilities of arranging for meal delivery.
honey and apples and a round, sweet raisin challah. Prepare enough food for the holiday so you do not have to cook for a few days and can just enjoy the moment.”

“If you are in shape to walk outside and the weather is nice, take a walk, wearing a mask,” she suggests.

“Before the holiday,” Dr. Fogelman continues, “call someone you haven’t spoken to in a long time to wish them a Happy New Year. Don’t wait for people to call you. Don’t stand on ceremony. Just call.”

“If you have a prayer book for the holidays, take it out and read the prayers. If you know the tunes sing out loud. If you prefer to have your own communication with the Almighty, do so.”

Rabbi Laura Geller, Rabbi Emerita of Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills, Calif., and author of the new book, “Getting Good at Getting Older,” says that one of the challenges this year these days is creating community when people are social distancing. She suggests that those who are willing to use electronics on the holiday might enjoy having a holiday meal with a friend or family member via Zoom, or getting together with a friend in the same building to watch services together online.

She emphasizes that to appreciate the holidays most fully, people should prepare ahead of time in some way, perhaps reading the mahzor or some poetry. To prepare for the Yizkor service on Yom Kippur, people should light the yahrzeit candle before the holiday begins, and although there is no specific prayer, she says it is good to pause and remember the people who have passed away.

“One of the powers of Yizkor is to recognize that you are part of the rest of the world who have also experienced loss,” Rabbi Geller says. “Think of ways to remember the person or people, perhaps write a journal, or talk to others. In advance, I would call up others who are also remembering the same people and spend time remembering together.”

And for those who are remembering people whom no one else remembers, find a friend or social worker to talk with and share memories of parents or others.

Rabbi Dickstein underscores that there has been so much loss this year, and, as a result, a lot of grief that must be acknowledged. She suggests that when people light yahrzeit candles, they especially think of the people in whose memory they are lighting for the first time.

“For those who find religion comforting, Judaism provides good tools to cope and connect with others,” says Dr. Steven Tzvi Pirutinsky, assistant professor in the Touro Graduate School of Social Work. “We have a very rich Jewish tradition. There are many ways of connecting with tradition and with God. Sometimes you have to find alternatives that work for you. Instead of shul, you might do some studying or listen to some tapes of lectures or music.”

Dr. Pirutinsky is also a licensed clinical psychologist whose research focuses on the intersections between spirituality, religion, culture, mental health and well-being, particularly within the Orthodox Jewish community.

“In terms of remembrance, it doesn’t have to be formal through the Yizkor service. You might have a conversation, look at photos, or, if you are creative, exercise some creative expression. Everyone needs to find a meaningful way to commemorate the people they have lost, to feel their presence.”

The grandson of four Holocaust survivors, Dr. Pirutinsky enjoys taking his children to visit his grandmother, and has of late been doing those visits outside. With his wife’s grandmother, who is also a survivor, the family keeps in touch via video chat (facilitated by his wife’s sister).

“Even if you can’t do it the way you’d ideally want to, there are options, whether phone calls or different activities to stay in touch, like exchanging photographs.”

Sandy Myers, vice president of external relations at Selfhelp Community Services, notes the complexities of this particular High Holiday season.

“The holidays are a uniquely meaningful time, and this year, because of the pandemic, they can also be a difficult time because of isolation,” she says. “Our Virtual Senior Center (see sidebar for access information) can provide the fulfillment that people might otherwise get from sitting around the table with family and friends.”

The Virtual Senior Center is an online, interactive platform, via Zoom. For this season, the center is planning a class in English about the holidays taught by Rabbi Paulette Posner, a question-and-answer session in Russian and other programs.

This is also the season of forgiveness: extending forgiveness to our loved ones, to ourselves and, for some people, to God. Like every year, some will find comfort and strength in Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel’s “Prayer for the Days of Awe,” a 1997 opinion piece in The New York Times. The author and Holocaust survivor addresses God directly: “As we Jews now enter the High Holidays again, preparing ourselves to pray for a year of peace and happiness for our people and all people, let us make up, Master of the Universe. In spite of everything that happened? Yes, in spite. Let us make up: for the child in me, it is unbearable to be divorced from you so long.”

For all of us, as we celebrate the holidays, recall earlier days and share our prayers and blessings for the New Year with each other, this is the season to affirm the Jewish teaching of choosing life.
If you live in the United States or Canada outside the listed areas, please call the Claims Conference for assistance (646) 536-9100.

Each agency listed below is funded by the Claims Conference to help support a designated Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program. If you know a survivor who needs aid or if you would like to volunteer to help a survivor, please contact any of the agencies below.

If you are a Holocaust Survivor who needs help, please call one of the numbers below.
All exercise programs should be initiated only after consultation with your physician.

Please be careful and, if possible, don’t exercise alone; always wear your Medical Alert button. Have a phone nearby in case of a fall.

During the performance of the exercises, please be sure to be next to a wall, furniture or a prop. When you are seated, please hold both sides of the chair seat.

These exercises were prepared for you by Konstantin Ostetov, Rehabilitation Specialist, OEB Shalom, Bulgaria.

From a sitting position raise your toes, then raise the heels of your feet. Repetition: 7 -10 times

Now, alternate the movement of the two feet, so that when you are raising the left toe, you are raising the right heel. Repetition: 20-30 times

From a sitting position with bent knees, stretch one leg forward first, then bring it back and stretch the other forward. When the first leg gets back to initial position, the second leg goes forward. Repetition: 7 - 10 times per leg.

Stand with hands propped on the back of the chair, then squat slightly and stand. This is not a deep squat; bend the knees slightly. Repetition: 5 – 7 times

Stand with your hands propped on the back of the chair and march in place by bending the knees high, slowly alternating legs. Do this for 30 seconds, then go a little faster for 10 seconds and then slow down again.
The Claims Conference wants to be in touch with you during these challenging times.

Inside L’Chaim, you will find important information in English and Russian including:

- A Letter from the Claims Conference Leadership
- Suggestions for meaningful holidays at home
- Culinary treats for the High Holidays
- Exercises to practice at home
- Guidelines for protecting yourself and others
- Contact information for local agencies

The Claims Conference newsletter is available in English and Russian. Please visit our website for more information.

High Holiday Edition

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Chaim

The Claims Conference