

Welcome KI members, clergy, staff, and volunteers - and thank you for attending KI's 118th annual meeting!

We have a lot to be proud of, to look forward to, and be thankful for!

In the next 14 minutes, I'd like to highlight each of those categories:

1. What we can **be proud of this last year**
2. The **exciting efforts underway for next and beyond**
3. Our **appreciation** for those who have and are making it possible.

While I will wait for most thanks till the end of my report, I'd like to express one now – to **KI's members!**

We went into COVID, not knowing if congregants would remain committed to KI

Would they stay, would they engage, would they support KI?

The answer has been a **resounding Yes!**

- Our membership numbers are relatively unchanged
- We have been very active – even if it was remotel
- And our paid dues total is similar to past years.

Thank you for your belief in KI – and showing it through your actions.

We are coming into another year of change– and **we hope to earn your continued faith and participation in KI!**

Now – What did we accomplish last year?

COVID in general:

- We ensured that we were not a danger to anyone
- We reached out to our congregants to help support them
- We provided services, community, and programs that helped people stay connected, fulfilled, and in touch with their Judaism

That comes out more as we look at different categories of our offerings.

First - Worship and Larger programs

HHD Experience

- We committed to ourselves that our congregants would fully **experience** what they yearned for & more from the HHDs
- With the team of Patty Carlis managing production, and Rabbi Seth delivering from his heart, we hear we did that.
- And we also invented a new reach out – the Bags of Awe with their KI created inspirational content – delivered to homes or picked up – yielding longed for conversations and connection.

Weekly Shabbat services

- Many found comfort in weekly Shabbat Services
- Our attendance was about the same or greater as in person – 40 to 60 households
- We had a new medium to adjust to – and with support from Tom’s Freedman’s technology group, and Rabbi Seth’s flexibility – we were able to make Shabbat meaningful for many of our congregants.
- And I want to put in a plug. If you haven’t been back to the sanctuary, please give it a try. It is a different world to hear the choir sing through the KI sound system – and sit in the beauty of our sanctuary and experience the light through the art of our stained glass

Passover Seder Sacks

The content, sentiment, and creativity of the bags would have been enough – but the parts that I really remember are –

- Getting to know awesome congregants, that I didn’t know that well before – with whom I hope the friendships grow
- Getting bags to Country Manor Jewish seniors – whether they were members or not -for whom I heard the gesture was very comforting

These really embodied the “personal” aspect of “our congregants feel known and cared and their belonging is personnel

Online Gala

- This was a great day – online when it was new to many of us
- It was an example of resilience, creativity, the talent amongst us, and our member’s openness to try new things.

Interest Focused KI Activities

As I have said before, I often picture KI’s 270 households as though we were gathered in a field viewed from above – grouped in circles of interest and connection. Some people are in one circle, some are in many.

Circle themes include Worship, Education, Entertainment, Community, and helping others. Many cross boundaries.

We hope each of you have found at least one circle that brings you joy and/or meaning – or will let us know what activities we can add so you can do so!

Here is a very incomplete sampling:

Women of KI – who Mary Salinger will speak about in depth later today

Shabbat Out of the Box – providing creative ways to celebrate shabbat – and expanding our horizons.

Adult Ed –

Providing us meaningful and joyful programs. I was told by a several people that Dr. Amy Slenker's presentations on COVID were the most informative and useful they had heard

And there was the joy of being back at Dinner and a Movie, eating Chef Eric's food, and some of my first in-person schmoozing at the food pickup.

Adult Hebrew – Each year a group of students finds something very meaningful for themselves in learning with Alan Salinger. Those of you who saw their service know how much it means to them and sensed the fun they had, and how dedicated they were.

Brit Olam – Where my & others' horizons were expanded by being exposed to many aspects of important social issues – including education funding, housing, racism, election districting.

Gardening Committee – Keeping KI Beautiful

Boots on the Ground making a Difference

Mitzvah Core – Quietly delivering meals and services to those who had had setbacks or difficulties – showing *love through action* when it mattered most.

Family Promise – We continued to support this wonderful program where we help families who suffered setbacks that caused them lose housing, and we got to know them, and each other better. We did it remotely through the pandemic – and expect to be safely back in-person in August.

Religious School & Youth

Rabbi Shoshana will cover this.

But I have to say how proud I am of the students and their families that were **confirmed and became b’nai mitzvahs**. The students applied themselves and found meaning in their services – despite the pandemic. The services were beautiful and moving. I encourage all of us to attend these services, even if we don’t know the families – they are very rewarding

Now a few less obvious areas

The Rabbi Search team is doing an incredible job – seeking to better understand what our congregants are looking for in their Jewish Experience, so that we know what to look for in a Rabbi.

Patty will speak more about this. I just want to mention it has enabled us to recognize areas to address **now**. You will hear more about that and Family engagement in Next Year’s Focus.

Office Management

The team has made changes that make KI stronger and more efficient. They include:

- Contracted our bookkeeping for more professionalism and efficiency
- Identifying and engaging a professional & responsive Audit Firm
- We are about to hire a very promising Office and Communications manager – who will greatly expand our bandwidth to serve our congregants better and attract new ones.

Executive Committee and Board

Your Executive Committee and Board have been meeting monthly. We are blessed to have such dedicated, thoughtful and competent people so committed to KI. All that we covered above is enabled by their work.

Now – on to next year:

As I think you know, Eric Rappaport has stepped up to be president elect. **Eric**, your love for KI – and your proven ability to build community is the perfect fit. KI is very fortunate, and I am deeply grateful.

I would like everyone to know that Eric has already been extremely active – both contributing to what we are doing for next year – and readying himself to take the reins.

Eric and I have discussed that last year - given the pandemic – we focused on being of service during difficult times. **This year our goal is to build for the future**. We feel like we are getting a powerful freight train moving forward – adding more locomotives to pull the load.

Here are some of the engines for growth and advancement. These are in addition to the strong engines already pulling us – Rabbi Seth and Vikki, Karen and our singers, and Shoshana and the religious school team,

1) The **Rabbi Search** is underway. Through it we will better understand KI and seek a Rabbi that honors and builds from all that Rabbi Seth has done for us.

2) We have brought an **incredibly good group of KI members onto the board**, pending your approval tonight. I hope you have read their bios in the bulletin or online. All of them are great, many of them represent the demographics of the new members we seek

3) We are forming a **Family and Youth Engagement team**. We heard loud and clear from Rabbi Search congregant interviews that KI needs draw in **younger members** and have KI be important and valuable to their lives. **We want KI to really call to them – becoming more meaningful to our current members and attracting new ones.**

4) We are focusing on **Strategic Communication** so that we can reach and interest more potential members. We will hone our messages, clarify our target audiences, and expand our use of media – especially social media. I greatly appreciate that our new proposed board member, Ellyn Schindler, for whom this is her profession, is leading us in this.

5) We will have **greater bandwidth in our office**, enabling us to serve congregants better and attract new ones. I am very happy to introduce Ashley Banko, who will join us as Office/Communications manager in mid-July.

6) **Our quiet little library is going to have the capability to meaningfully contribute much more to KI.** Thanks to Audrey Nolte for bringing Sean Boyle to us. Sean is a retired Navy Commander who ran the Jewish Day School Library for 3 years and became a leader in a national Jewish Library Organization. He has volunteered to help us - finding resources to enrich us and aiding us with research and technology. More to come on this. Thank you, Sean!

7) **WE’LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN.** We already have in-person Shabbat Services, and High Holy Days will be in Person and Live Streamed. Thanks to Lynda Pollack and Charlie Richter – we will have our first congregational musical gathering on Wednesday August 25 – a KI Religious School Alumnus who will play for us in a beautiful nearby park pavilion. I hope there will be more events like these in the future! We will have a Gala honoring Eric and Choty on October 2nd – and the Harvest 5K later that month.

I’d like to thank all those Who Makes all this Possible

Our Members – as I mentioned at the start

Rabbi Seth and Vikki – who threw their whole hearts into serving our congregants well throughout the pandemic.

Past Presidents, many on this call – who each dealt with the challenges of their times – and enabled KI to be strong today.

Your Executive Committee: Larry Zelson, Tom Freedman, Ian Carlis, Alyssa Emswiler, Alan Salinger, with Lynda Pollack, and Eric Rappaport representing Woman of KI and Brotherhood

Your Board – Including, auxiliaries and past president

- I'll just mention those who have finished their terms: Mike Obenski, Maryann Snyder, Amy Sams, and Marc Rosenberg, and Jonathan Epstein – as you will hear the others during the Nominations.

THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE AND WILL SERVE YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONTRIBUTIONS

There are so many people I would like to name so that you know all they are doing for KI. In interest of time, I will have to just give categories – but that does not diminish the incredible contribution you all make.

Nominating Committee that brought us these great candidates!

The leads and members of the committees I mentioned and those I didn't.

All of our incredible volunteers

Shoshsana and RS Teachers

The numerous thoughtful people who have advised me

Lastly, I want to thank an **organization**, the people who have **contributed** to it, and the people that **run it**, that **quietly enable the KI you know today and the KI of the future.**

The **KI Foundation** manages funds contributed for KI's long term good. That means **wisely investing** and **distributing** those funds.

You will see in our Financial Report, that for this year's Foundation distribution, KI is asking the equivalent of almost 2/3rds of the amount we receive in member's dues. **That is a huge portion of what it takes to operate KI and to build KI for the future!**

That amount is within the Foundation's guidelines for **prudent annual distribution**. It is only **possible** because of the **contributions** made to the fund – and the **incredible stewardship** of those funds in recent years.

The funds value has **quadrupled in the last 20 years**. That is exceedingly uncommon for Foundations supporting religious organizations. And it is the **reason** that we are able focus on efforts to enable KI to **thrive** – vs **just survive**. I talk with other Reform synagogue presidents and can tell you that very few are so fortunate.

Thank you to the leaders and participants of the Foundation, including President Mike Stroock and the current team and their predecessors. **We especially thank long term Chair of the Investment Committee, Lewis Gaines who developed and implemented the investment strategy that yielded these results. Thank you, Lew, for all that you have made possible for KI!**

I also want to thank Bill Bergstein – who has helped KI – and many of the Lehigh Valley’s Jewish organizations - with our financial responsibilities in immeasurable ways. **Bill** – you are a treasure to the community.

KI’s leadership will work hard to use the annual distribution wisely to:

- Create meaningful Jewish experiences for our congregants and
- Attract new members so we can be more self-sustaining

And we appreciate our members:

- Making full use of the services that KI offers
- Contributing what you can to help KI thrive
- Inviting unaffiliated friends and acquaintances to try KI offering, which can lead to growing membership.