

## **2023 High Holy Day Appeal**

**By Cybil Flora, AJ President**

Good morning.

I hope 5784 has started well for everyone. I know my year has started well and I plan on this year continuing to be a good one. I realized on the first day of Rosh Hashanah that I had not been around so many people worshipping together since our 2019 High Holy Days. Last year I was so ill I could not even watch services. Being here with so many of you filled me with great joy and made me feel very optimistic for our congregation and our community. My appreciation for our clergy, staff, preschool, and volunteers abounds this time of year. I am going to use one of my precious four minutes to brag on our clergy and staff. We have four people working in the AJ office and they have a renewed sense of teamwork. The way they have pitched in, learned new things, helped each other, and put in the extra work this year is admirable. I encourage everyone to thank them, if not today, then in the near future. They allow others to focus on their core responsibilities and stay out of the minutiae.

For example - our High Holy Day clergy could focus on creating welcoming, engaging, thoughtful, and meaningful services. We appreciate the services of Rabbi Metzger and Rabbi Bayar. The work of preparing yourselves and preparing services is noticeable and we appreciate all you have and are doing on behalf of our community. Cantor - I could claim to be at a loss for words to express to you this congregation's love and appreciation. However, I am rarely so stunned that I am rendered speechless. I could say that you are an all-around Mensch, but that is not enough. You have a quiet approach to collaborative leadership that brings people into the discussion and decision making that always manages to teach me something about how to treat people and approach delicate or difficult situations. Not to mention the mental, spiritual, and physical work you have put into yourself and us for the holidays. The melodies and words have at times filled my heart with such overwhelming feelings that they have bubbled out of my eyes as tears. I know this entire community is in appreciation of you stepping up this year and leading us through what is both a delicate and difficult situation.

We are at a place and time where there is a lot of uncertainty and that can make for a lot of anxiety. How do we forge ahead as a congregation? What do we do to help our beloved AJ family heal so we can continue to thrive? Who do we as individuals and as a community want to be in the future? I know what I would like us to do. I would like us to connect with one another and create more value in each other's lives. AJ has the potential to do this - it provides a physical space for this to occur, it provides staff to help organize, it has a

Cantor and a Rabbi Emeritus that provide ideas, counsel, and connection. We have lay leaders who selflessly serve this community, and we have members who are intimately connected and those with whom there is tremendous potential to connect and help by providing space for us all to thrive.

Now to get to the reason for me being here speaking to you this morning. First, I want to express my gratitude to each of you for contributing to the AJ family through your donations, dues, time, and talent. I am sure many of you have noticed the increase to the costs of things in your own household budget. AJ has certainly noticed an increase in these costs. We endeavor to pay our employees a good wage. We continue to keep our building with its aging systems viable for all our needs such as our plumbing, heating, lighting, and cooling systems. We are investing in IT infrastructure that meets the needs of the current century. We work to provide programs to our congregation that help us enjoy ourselves, learn from one another and from our community clergy, and connect with one another.

Last year was difficult, we ended the year in a deficit that caused us to dip deeply into our reserves to meet our financial obligations. We need your help this year to be financially viable and to meet the needs of our congregation. We are actively working with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism to explore all options for a rabbinical search to be chaired by Dr. Howard Klein and Dr. Susan Eichenberger. We are creating shared programming with all of Louisville's congregations such as an upcoming social event in November. We are also creating more shared programming with our sister Conservative congregation in the Highlands..

The diversity of the programming we are creating is a reflection of the ever-increasing diversity of our community. My heart is warmed by new community members bringing new ideas and new skills to our community. This is seen by all of us in the younger members joining our choir, and in our increasing pool of community members who are able to lead davening and chant Torah. We are a dynamic congregation actively pursuing our goals of open doors, open hearts and open minds. Please join with me in actively contributing to our annual High Holy Day Appeal so that we can continue meeting our financial obligations and continue providing services as well as opportunities for learning, socializing, and volunteering opportunities which will grow our connections to each other and our community.

To make it easy on all of you to turn in your pledge, donation cards were passed out to families as they checked in. Ushers will be walking around to collect them. If you are watching online or need to think about your donation please see our website and make your donation online.

Thank you and my hope is you all have a meaningful Yom Kippur.