

In my last Shofar article, I wrote about thank you notes, and *hakarat hatov*, gratitude. I need to repeat that theme for a moment to recognize and thank Rabbi Karen, Rabbi Micah, and our Board of Trustees for their willingness to give up a gorgeous Sunday afternoon two weeks ago to spend the time inside, together. That day, we met and participated in an orientation retreat led by a facilitator from the Leadership Development Institute of CJP. The goal of the retreat was to allow Board members the opportunity to get to know each other better, to consider their roles as temple leaders, and discuss what they hope to do for Temple Beth David with their service. I want to share with you a few notes from that session.

In terms of learning about one another, I was interested to hear more about why board members agreed to serve. One of the things I noticed as we went around the room was, how many people answered the question of “why did you join the board?” - just as I did - with “because Dan, or David, or Paul, or the rabbis. asked me”. I am hoping to learn what their magic is, so I can use it when my turn comes. But seriously, I think that says something significant about personal connections, and more importantly, about the commitment your board members have to our community. They were asked and they said yes. Given the time and energy it takes to do the work of our temple, that is quite a gift to us all.

On the flip side, there were a few brave souls who admitted that they agreed to serve on the board in order to make a change, work on a project, or represent a specific group within the congregation. I like seeing that, too. Not because I’m encouraging radical change, but because I value that kind of creativity and passion. I believe a mix of dedication to our tradition, of who we are, along with a desire to try new things is the best way to move our community forward. Experimenting is good and a worthwhile way to learn. We always need new ideas and new energy and I appreciate those who are willing to work in this way.

You may be interested, but not surprised, to hear that the number one worry among members of your board is sustaining congregational membership and engagement. Digging deeper into that issue, it’s not just about numbers, it’s thinking about what we do to attract new members and keep established members of our community involved, interested, and fulfilled. Membership, of course, ties in to worry number two, maintaining our financial stability. Worry number three reflects a desire for the board to do well in its decision-making function and to maintain its connections to the members they represent. Again, this demonstrates how seriously

board members take their responsibility as they attempt to make decisions that are representative of the community and are in its best interest.

During this season of reflection, it is appropriate to ask, “what can we do better?” and “what is our vision of Temple Beth David for the future?” At the retreat, board members expressed interest in improving the programming for several groups in our community, including interfaith families, empty-nesters, and post-B’nai Mitzvah teens. We are committed to continuing our programming for families with young children and developing more intergenerational programs and events. We need to expand our fundraising efforts to create a broader support for the work that we do. All worthy goals, but I know we could use some help in bringing these wishes to life. In order to make things happen, we need ideas and we need energy from the entire community. With the hopes of improved participation, I have asked all of our committee chairs to add the time and date of upcoming meetings to the Weekly Shofar and I would encourage any of you who are interested to join. There will be opportunities to try new things. I hope you will take advantage of them.

We are fortunate to be in our current position. We have been inspired and energized by our - no longer quite so new - rabbis. Our membership has grown and we are seeing more new families and children in our religious school. I think it is time to dream and to think strategically about where we want to be three years or five years from now. A task force is examining options for an early learning center here at Temple Beth David and we are continuing to address the maintenance requirements of our lovely temple home. There is interest on the board in revitalizing our congregational needs committee to assess the progress we’ve made since our last assessment and to learn about our membership’s wish list. The religious practice committee will be looking for your input on several questions, including interfaith engagement. I hope that you will participate in these opportunities to give your leaders feedback. As the year goes on, I will encourage the board to put all of this information together to develop a long-term plan for how we want to be, together.

One more return to the theme of gratitude. I thank you for the opportunity to be with you in this role. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your president. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank those who have given so much time to prepare for these High Holiday services including the Religious Practices Committee, Lisa Altman, our High Holiday coordinator and Gary Kaplan, our Vice President of Religious Practices. Thank you also to the

many congregants who serve as ushers during this time; to the Brotherhood for coordinating the parking; to the Sisterhood, in advance, for the break fast and to Roberto Vasconcelos for all he does to make our building ready. Finally, thank you to Rabbi Karen and Rabbi Micah, for leading us in meaningful worship along with Batya Ellinoy and Michael McLaughlin for their beautiful High Holiday music.

I wish you all a sweet and healthy New Year. *L'shanah tova.*