

Good Evening Everyone -- L' Shana Tovah. My name is Amy Katzenstein-Harrington. I am your new Board President.

Tonight as I look around, I see so many members of the TBE community I know including old friends from College days at UCSC, colleagues from years of teaching, Eastside neighbors, and new friends I have made here at TBE. There are also many new faces that I don't know yet, but whom I intend to meet during the next 2 years as I serve as your board president.

I must confess that never in my wildest dreams, did I ever think about being president of a congregation.

Let me tell you two stories about my upbringing that will help explain why, and also illuminate my intended focus on issues of social justice and welcoming inclusion during my tenure as President.

I was not raised in a Jewish congregation. Despite the fact that many of my parents' best friends were Jewish, that we held wonderful Jewish holiday celebrations in our home, and had lively intellectual discussions about social justice around our kitchen table, my parents did not join or affiliate with any temple or synagogue. Although my parents did not explicitly speak of ti-kun-olum -- they took actions to repair the world and taught me the importance of doing so. They sponsored fundraisers in our home for a diverse collection of people fighting for civil rights and social justice, and joined

those against the Vietnam War. I was exposed to a wide range of people who made me aware of the world's need to be repaired. In these ways, my parents raised me to work for social justice.

My second story reflects back to my years as a teenager. As an adolescent I wanted to be part of a Synagogue, because there was a group of Jewish kids at my school who did not include me in their circle because I did not belong to their synagogue. The experience of being excluded and not being able to participate in their activities is part of why I am now so passionate about making people feel welcomed to our congregation.

This summer Rabbi Paula held a Havdalah service during which many new members spoke about feeling welcome here at TBE. My heart swelled because it made me realize that our membership committee has had such a positive impact. We, all of us, must continue to make our temple welcoming and engaging.

Each of you has a gift to offer our temple community. Whether you are a gardener, baker, singer, teacher, a helper of people in need, a student of the Torah, a lover of Jewish books or films, a person who likes to question and debate Jewish issues, or even just a shmoozer, you have gifts to give. ***All gifts which come from your heart enrich our temple and are greatly appreciated. And in giving your gifts, I believe you will find yourself enriched.***

Two quick announcements:

1. We now have an engagement leader to help us create the community we desire. Melissa Sundberg, a long time congregant of TBE is reaching out to new members and helping form affinity groups led by our own congregants. If you have some special interest or passion which you would like to explore such a group, please let Melissa know.
2. We are in the process of searching for a new Executive Director for an intended hire date by the end of the year. In the meantime, we offer special thanks to Esther Herst who has been working tirelessly as our Interim Executive Director and helping with our search and selection of a new Executive Director.

For us to practice the Jewish value of economic justice, we need to pay every employee at TBE a living wage. To attract an experienced and high quality Executive Director, we will need to offer a competitive salary which makes it possible for them to live in one of the most expensive places in the country. There are many extremely generous people in our congregation, and if we can all just stretch a little bit, we should be able to attract, appropriately pay, and retain the people we need to thrive as a temple.

I am so honored to be your President and look forward to my expanded reach into the rich fabric of temple membership. I will be available once a month on Wednesday evenings in the new coffee lounge to talk with any congregants about what they would like to see done or what they can do to help improve our Temple community better serve its congregants and the world in which we live.

Several special thanks --

We thank Rabbis Paula and Shifra who continue to serve us lovingly and effectively in so many ways.

Thanks also to our staff who work tirelessly to keep everything functioning here at TBE on a daily basis, thereby making it possible for both Rabbis to focus on Rabbinical matters.

In addition, we owe thanks to an amazing group of Board members and committee chairs who give so much of themselves and work so hard for the continued well-being of this temple.

La Shana Tova. Have a peaceful and spiritually uplifting New Year and the Days of Awe to come. I am so happy you are a part of our community and wish you all Shalom.