



OKC President's Letter June 2023



How does a new President of Ohr Kodesh Congregation start her first letter to the Congregation? With gratitude.

Gratitude for the 18 years of spiritual life, education, and community my family has experienced at OKC. Gratitude to be entrusted with leading a motivated and enthusiastic Board of Directors as we meet to collaborate, to listen, to grow, to improve and to elevate our community. Gratitude to our dedicated staff - the faces you see (and often don't see) working behind the scenes to deliver quality childcare, education, religious services, educational programs, *kiddushim* and meals - while keeping the lights on and our spaces clean. And gratitude to be working in partnership with our amazing clergy who bring joy to our spiritual lives, comfort in times of crisis, learning opportunities to all, and a smile to my face whenever I see them.

I am excited to work with the rest of the Executive Committee – Vice Presidents Daniel Grunberger, Ari Blumenthal, and Gilda Zimmet, Treasurer Ellen Elow-Mintz, Secretary Sarah Horowitz, as well as Past Presidents Seth Yoskowitz and Rise Ain. Their knowledge, enthusiasm, and expertise are invaluable. I see this space - a monthly letter - as a way to communicate what is being discussed at Board meetings, what priorities we are acting on, what our challenges are, and what we, as a community, can do together to move us forward. Sometimes I might be a cheerleader promoting some exciting, upcoming programming (please keep looking out for 75th anniversary events!). Sometimes I might be contemplating a difficult decision or a challenge we are facing. But most times, I hope to inform and uplift our community with information about the efforts of the Board in support of our Congregational priorities.

In that spirit, I want to share three updates as to the current-and-upcoming activities of the Board:

1. **Designated Partners.** In a separate piece, you will read more about our new Designated Partner initiative – to facilitate ongoing communication with senior staff, the Board, and our greater community. One of our challenges has been eliciting productive feedback from our congregants and senior staff – feedback that is shared and that leads to positive changes and growth and dialogue. This is a new process, and we look forward to gauging its effectiveness in the months ahead.
2. **Staff Development and Stability.** We are so happy to have been working with many dedicated professionals who have brought us to this point in time. But as Ohr Kodesh has been growing and our needs have and continue to change, we have been adjusting our staff configuration, programming, and resource allocation alongside. We thank Jerry Kiewe, our Executive Director for the past 16 year, for his dedicated service. We have plans to onboard our new Executive Director, Monica Saff, and to have her settle in with the current ebb and flow of our routines. Rabbi Helfand is coming up to his two-year anniversary and Rabbi Glazer, our Director of Lifelong Learning, is getting her first year under her belt. Cantor Labovitz, coming up on nine



OKC President's Letter June 2023

years (!) with us, has also transitioned roles over time. We have a new Financial Management firm working with us to coordinate our new systems and we are looking to hire even more support staff in the near future. Our priorities are to ensure that our staff get what they need to do their jobs well in support of all the services and programs that our community needs, expects, and enjoys. And it is the Board's role to ensure that the work is getting done in a way that is responsive, efficient, and effective.

3. **Financial Stewardship.** Ohr Kodesh is lucky... no... blessed? No, that's not the word I'm looking for. Humbled/Amazed/Grateful that our community is financially stable, especially after two years of COVID-era challenges. We have a growing dues-paying membership that supports us and the programs we provide. And many members of this same community give over-and-above-dues to enable us to be in the strong financial position we are in. As a Board, it is our responsibility to make sure that the money coming into Ohr Kodesh is used in the most effective and responsible way possible. We need to address the current growth and changes over the past two years and what we think our needs will be in the future. To that end, we are launching a Finance Committee that – combined with our Budget Committee and Investment Committee – will position Ohr Kodesh to be strong and solid for many years to come.

That's a lot for a first letter. I'll end the same way I began – with gratitude for this community. I ask for patience and collaboration as we move through the next two years together.

Please reach out to me anytime: president@ohrkodesh.org.

Thank you.

Lizabeth Waggoner