

Good evening everyone, both those of you are here to help conduct this service, and those of you attending virtually. May all of you have an easy fast. As all of you have learned by now, there's only so much time you can sit there staring at a screen for these virtual events. So I'm going to keep these remarks brief.

As I start my final year as BCRC President, I must sincerely thank all of you for your good wishes, support, and kind words throughout my term. I thank all of the people who have served on the BCRC Board of Directors as well as those who have volunteered in various capacities over the last three years. And a special thank you to Rabbi Amy for her spiritual as well as practical guidance, and our administrator Lisa Zimmerman, who has done all the 'heavy lifting' that keeps our temple running.

Looking back over the past three years, we have come a long way at BCRC, from a fresh paint job and comfortable foyer and our beautiful inscription at the sanctuary entry, to a new a master plan which will usher our facility into its next phase. We obtained a Federal grant which has now resulted in our just recently completed security system. Let me pass my great thanks to our Security Committee, led by Doug Steil, without whom we could not have obtained the grant funds, or awarded the contract for the system. When you are able to come back to our building, you will find a big difference in security, with many new features including a professional grade entry control system that will admit only members and authorized visitors. Watch for details in the Blast! These physical improvements are great, but I am most heartened that we continue to attract new member families who have enthusiastically taken part in our community.

But this year when COVID-19 hit, we found ourselves faced with a totally different challenge unlike any we had seen before, one which threatened our very existence as our revenue dropped drastically due to the financial difficulties of our renters. Our thanks to Larry Deigh for working to keep some revenue coming from our tenants and to start slowly transitioning them back to full payment status. To help us bridge the most serious gap, we obtained a Federal PPP loan which enabled Rabbi Amy and Lisa to continue to receive a paycheck this summer. Thanks to Adrienne Skapura, Jodi Goldberger and Lisa Zimmerman for their invaluable assistance with this loan and with obtaining additional mortgage relief from our bank. As we quickly transitioned to remote learning and services, I was so impressed with how quickly all of you adapted to this very different method of operations. And now as we have started to reopen our Reopening Committee under the able leadership of our EVP David Waldman has taken charge of preparing the temple and establishing policies and procedures. Thanks to everyone who has served on this committee!

I must tell you, it hasn't all been pain and suffering under the pandemic. In fact, we have learned some valuable lessons which we plan to continue to apply even when we are all back in the building. One thing we saw was that once our services went online, we were freed from geographical limitations. Now we have been attracting loyal attendees from outside the local area, including some of our current and former members who found themselves outside the DC area during the pandemic, as well as some of our friends from around the country. Not only that, but it was a great way to bring services to the homes of people who find it hard to get out in the evening, such as parents of young children. Even after we return to the temple, we hope to continue offering some opportunities for remote access.

And how about meetings? Where previously there was resistance, everyone has now learned that Zoom is a great platform to hold committee and other meetings. Have you been reluctant to join a committee or even the Board of Directors because it's hard to drive to the temple on a busy weeknight? Our Board of Directors meetings have now transitioned to Zoom and we plan to keep it that way!

The High Holy Days have often been a time when peoples' minds turn to tzedakah, or charity. Tzedakah can take many forms, from contribution of money to contributions of time, effort and insight. This becomes more challenging when we are physically separated as we are this year. But this year our needs are greater than ever. As I told you before, we have suffered serious revenue losses due to our renters' COVID related financial difficulties. While we received some relief from the PPP loan as well as our bank, those are ending while our difficulties continue. And now, at the High Holy Days season we are facing an additional major loss of revenue from our usual High Holy Days ticket sales, plus added costs to provide these services remotely. Looking for a specific need to direct your donation toward? Donations are needed toward a sound system, newer laptops, projector screens, and an eternal light.

Starting now, we will be bringing back our 'fundraising thermometer' and reporting weekly on our progress in raising \$50,000 by Dec. 31. If you have intended to help out at this time of year, or have the ability to contribute, please make your contribution as soon as possible, while our needs are the greatest due to the continuing impact of the pandemic. We welcome any member who can pledge to match other members' contributions – a great way to incentivize people to give when the impact of their donation is doubled!

We are a kehilla kedosha, a holy community. We are your friends and your family, who support you in times of adversity, and celebrate with you in times of joy. Thank you and may you and your families be sealed for a good year in the book of life.