

## **President's Report: Annual Meeting May 16, 2017**

Submitted by President Ellen Torres

Welcome to the 2017 Annual Congregational Meeting!

I appreciate your attendance at this Annual meeting, coming to hear the year-end reports, and to vote on Board Candidates and revisions to the By-Laws. Like last year, the Nominating Committee had difficulty getting two names in excess of the number of vacancies on the Board of Trustees. So much so, that we are asking for your vote to make changes in the language of the By-Laws to revise that item. Currently, there are five candidates for the five positions. If the majority here agrees, we can approve this group as a slate. We also have six revisions to the By-Laws, which we sent out to you in an email last week and which appear on your ballot. We were a few days delayed in getting this information to you, so we hope that you will allow us to vote on these items even though you received them a few days later than is stated in the Constitution. We would like to get these revisions put into the Constitution this year, rather than waiting another year. The items, for the most part, add necessary language into our By-Laws to explain the purpose of some of our committees and to amend some outdated language.

I want to thank everyone for all their work on behalf of Temple Beth-El. I especially want to thank those who are stepping down after their two-year term on the Board of Trustees, Renee Frank and Erich Zameret, for their years of service, dedication, and hours spent as leaders of the congregation. Luckily for us, Erich remains as a teacher in our Religious School and a worship leader, and Renee has agreed to chair our Strategic Planning Committee and work with our Leadership Development program. Please give both of them a round of applause! I also want to thank our returning Board members for their dedication to TBE and active participation in our synagogue—Allen Blum, Ann Berkson, Mike Lieberman, Pearie Bruder, Sue Brown, and Susan Michelson. Thanks also to Sisterhood Council Rep Dee Cook, who is returning, and to Mensch Club Rep Jeff Lewis, who is on the slate to be elected. Diane Fleishman, Ned Rubin, and I are on the slate for another term. Much love and appreciation go to Rabbi Karol and Rhonda for all their work on behalf of Temple Beth-El. We value the partnership we have with you and want to recognize all the work you do on behalf of the Temple, the Religious School, and everyone in the congregation.

Some of the highlights of our year include the following:

- We completed an annual review of Rabbi Karol, who received a high rating overall.
- Then we held a Special Meeting on November 10<sup>th</sup> to vote on the Rabbi's return, which was approved by a vote of 72%, and we established a contract negotiation committee, which helped to finalize the Rabbi's contract.
- We continued our fantastic annual fundraisers, the Matzo Ball Open Golf Tournament in October and the Jewish Food & Folk Festival in April, which maintain high community and Temple attendance, and we resurrected our Renaissance Faire Pastrami Booth, which we hope will continue to grow in future years. Thank you to all the chairs: Rebecca Berkson and Aggie Saltman, co-chairs of JFFF, Allen Blum and Arthur Berkson, co-chairs of the Matzo Ball Open, and Jeff Lewis and Dave Zeemont, co-chairs of the Ren Faire Booth. Thank you for all your hard work!
- I want to thank the Board of Trustees for sponsoring the FestivUS event held in January, which is our way of celebrating and thanking the congregation for your support of the Temple.
- Mike Batkin has again offered to continue to match all contributions made toward the Irving Batkin Memorial Scholarship Fund up to \$1800, for all donations received by July 31.

- Our Adult Education Committee headed up by Rose Jacobs has hosted three events this year with another one planned for Sunday, May 21.
- We have re-established the TBE History Committee under the leadership of Jeff Brown, who is working with his committee to maintain Temple historical records and materials and to collect relevant historical information.
- The Library, under the leadership of Linda Kruger, has now fully catalogued 2,100 book titles in electronic format, and the committee plans to become more active this coming year. They are developing proposals to increase shelving space as well.
- Our Membership and Outreach Committee chaired by Diane Fleishman has seen an increase in 7 family units this year, whom we recognized at our January FestivUS event. Diane continues to communicate with potential members who contact us through our website or who visit us when they are in town.
- Our Religious School Committee led by Pearie Bruder with the support of Rabbi Karol continues to keep our students engaged in multiple festive activities such as the Purim Carnival and Purim Schpiel, the preparation of hamantaschen and delivery of the Purim baskets to our congregants. The students completed multiple Tzedakah projects, helped at the JFFF, and continue to prepare for their upcoming Bar and Bat Mitzvahs.
- The Security Committee headed by Mark Saltman has installed a variety of essential security technology—cameras, a video & audio doorbell, and panic buttons, as well as locks on interior doors. Mark and the Religious School faculty have initiated evacuation drills so that students are prepared in the event of an emergency.
- The Social Action Committee chaired by Ned Rubin has held multiple candidate forums, community events on significant topics like poverty, is discussing the issue of immigration, and holds monthly chavurahs to discuss and explore the Jewish moral imperative for social action and social justice.
- Under the guidance of Youth Committee Chair Leora Zeitlin and BETY Advisor Andrea Orzoff, Temple teens have been provided with leadership training through NFTY, involvement in Reform youth activities at local, regional, and national levels, along with camperships, and social activities.
- Our Sisterhood and Mensch Club have continued to grow and thrive. Sisterhood supports many projects internationally and locally. They help support our Friday onegs, maintain our kitchen and purchased two new refrigerators. They have given four scholarships this year and host Sisterhood events for their 69 members. They also organize the Rosh Hashanah oneg, Yom Kippur Break-the-Fast, and the Passover second night Seder.
- The Mensch Club has hosted multiple events throughout the year to encourage camaraderie and to raise money for the Temple. They coordinated the renewed Renaissance Faire Pastrami Booth in tandem with the Center for Spiritual Living, bringing back a highly desired fundraiser.
- Under the leadership of Jim Rosenthal, several of us have developed a Leadership Development team for the purpose of building the leadership capacity in some of our younger and/or newer congregants and to encourage people to take on leadership roles such as being committee chairs, event and fundraising leaders, and eventually board members. We will be using training modules provided by the URJ, the Union for Reform Judaism, to support our work.
- We became affiliates of the Jewish Federation of Greater El Paso over a year ago, and are taking advantage of some of their activities and opportunities. Currently Bill Stein is the TBE representative to the Federation Board. We are looking for one more congregant to volunteer to represent Temple Beth-El on the Federation Board because in order to maintain our affiliation, we need to send two representatives to their monthly Board meetings. Our affiliation allows us to participate in their well-attended and exciting programs. Phil and Sally

Alkon recently represented Temple Beth-El at the Federation's Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel Independence Day, Celebration. Thank you Phil and Sally and our Israel Committee! We were also provided with the opportunity to write a grant, earning \$13,142.86 that is supporting a Scholar in Residence program here at TBE. We brought in Cantor Robyn Helzner in January, who served as a Cantor in China and who is an outstanding performer in her own right. At the end of August we are hosting Rabbi Bob Alper, a renowned Jewish comedian, and in November we are bringing in Jewish culinary expert Tina Wasserman, who will be presenting a food demonstration weekend here at Temple Beth-El. Our grant-writing team of Bill Stein, Alison Mann, Jane Grider, Irv Ross, Sue Brown, Tanah Hemingway, Rabbi Karol, and myself put in many hours to write the grant and present it to the Federation. The Federation has their Annual Meeting on June 14, and we will send out information about it as we would like to bring a delegation from TBE like we did last year.

- I attended the URJ Scheidt Seminar for Temple Presidents held in San Diego in February. It provided me with a tremendous amount of information, contacts, and inspiration, and will support the work I am doing as Temple President throughout my next term if I am given that opportunity.
- In addition, this past week we held a Board Training facilitated by URJ trainer Jim Cherney from Denver who helped us do some needed self-reflection and helped us to establish important goals and an action plan for the coming year. Our Board is committed to accomplish the following: we will assist the Rabbi in establishing an administrative task force; we will share personal stories and Board profiles in the Adelante that we hope will encourage congregants to become involved in leadership roles; we will facilitate a leadership development training program to encourage congregants to become more involved in leadership opportunities; we will develop a plan to recognize and thank our Temple volunteers; we will establish focus groups to discuss people's concerns; and we will adopt a Board Covenant or Brit Avodah to clarify expectations and responsibilities of Board members.
- New this year: we have compiled a packet of our Committee and Leadership Reports for your review, so we hope you find this informative.

Finally, I want to share that I have learned that it is important for me to build a sacred partnership with you, the congregation. A sacred partnership requires a commitment to Torah, both ancient texts and our personal Torah, which are the values that guide us in our daily lives, our innermost teachings, that guide and influence the sacred partnerships we build with others. Let's continue to build sacred partnerships based on Jewish values of mutual respect, trust, honesty, listening, and communication.

I continue to thank you all for your dedication and work on behalf of Temple Beth-El, to remind you to embrace inclusiveness and tolerance, and to continue working together to strengthen our Wisdom, Community Spirit, Tzedakah, Sacred Purpose—and our **Sacred Partnerships**.