

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At the Congregational Meeting on the evening of Sunday, December 6, we accomplished three important pieces of business:

1. The Budget for Fiscal Year 2020-2021. We passed a budget for the year in progress that addresses the harsh realities of both a history of spending that for years has exceeded revenues and a particularly severe decline in dues this year. This budget includes cuts to staff pay. In this area, both Rabbi Amy and Cantor Steve generously agreed to give up their contractually guaranteed 2% raises. Other staff members are taking a 2.5% cut over the course of the year. Even with these savings, the budget projects a deficit of almost \$100,000 by the end of June. However, the Board is going to look at ways to deploy donations from fundraising to bring the deficit under \$60,000.

We owe enormous thanks to the Finance Committee (as always) and to the Ad Hoc Budget Committee, for their tireless work in coming to grips with a difficult situation and many numbers.

2. Incoming and Outgoing Board Members. On January 1, 2021, the Synagogue Board will welcome four new members: Ducky Donath, Jeff Potash, Yoram Samets, and Brett Smith. We are fortunate to have such energetic and enthusiastic congregants willing to lend a hand in synagogue governance at this challenging time. At the same time, we say farewell to departing board members Rebecca Stern (who moved away in November), Jeff Priest, Judy Rosenstreich, and Wayne Senville, all of whom have contributed enormously over their combined years of service. I am particularly grateful to Jeff Priest, who has served as a consummate Board Secretary for the last year. We know that Jeff, Judy, and Wayne will remain active in our community. Please thank them for their contributions.

3. Imagine 2025. The mission of Ohavi Zedek Synagogue is “to provide a welcoming home for a diverse Jewish community, offering both traditional and innovative spiritual practice, learning for all ages, and a commitment to social action.” **Imagine 2025** is Ohavi Zedek’s strategic visioning initiative, our plan to ensure that we truly live that mission over the next five years.

This new road map will build on the foundation that the congregation created ten years ago in the Tikvah 2020 plan. We will examine the ways our congregation and community have changed and continue to change. We will identify our present needs and plan for the future. And we will develop the means to achieve our goals and turn our dreams and desires into reality. The bulk of the work will unfold over the next four months, led by Josh Kernoff, Grace Oedel, Ingrid Pels, Jeff Potash, Yoram Samets, and Brett Smith.

Phase One, starting right away, will critically assess the current state of our synagogue. We will ask penetrating questions and analyze our finances, membership, and competitive environment

in light of our mission, vision, and values. The clergy, staff, and board will all contribute. But central to this phase will be a series of focus groups with defined segments of the congregation.

Right now, we are in the middle of this community-wide listening phase. We have already conducted ten listening sessions. I am so grateful to those that have participated and excited about the energy, passion and ideas that have been generated. Now we want to invite **you** to one of our upcoming listening sessions being held on these dates:

- January 13 at 5:00
- January 14 at 7:00
- January 18 at 5:00

Please join us to consider in a structured way why we joined OZ, what we value most about OZ, what our dreams are for OZ, and how we can help bring those dreams to life. Through these discussions, we aim not only to learn from one another but also to deepen our relationships and forge new ones, so we can continue to understand and support one another after the formal process has ended. **To participate, please reach out to Ingrid Pels at Ingridpels37@gmail.com.**

Phrases Two and Three of Imagine 2025, in the late winter and spring, will analyze what we have learned, prioritize, and set goals for the next three to five years. We will adopt policies and strategies that ensure a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable future for our synagogue. In this way, the changes we experience will arise organically from who we are and who we want to become.

I am excited by this initiative, and I hope you will participate enthusiastically in it. A successful outcome depends on our willingness to engage actively, listen carefully, and **imagine** the brightest future for our synagogue.

As always, if you have any questions or want to volunteer your time and energy, please email me or any of the core team members listed above.

4. Finally, the Congregational Meeting did not run as smoothly as I had hoped. I take personal responsibility for the irregularities during the budget question-and-answer period, which became chaotic and fractious. If we hold any more Congregational Meetings online, I will impose a more orderly process and demand a respectful tone throughout.

~ Nathaniel G. Lew
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