

FROM THE PRESIDENT

At our semi-annual Congregational Meeting on June 12, I had the opportunity to share the following:

At its heart, Judaism is about community. We draw strength in being together; in praying in a minyan, in learning, in caring for one another, in joyfully participating in others' celebrations and in being there for one another in times of sorrow and need.

When I think personally about this community, I think of my parents. As relative newcomers to Burlington, with a second child born in 1953—me—they were invited into this congregation by Isadore Kropsky, who insisted on paying for my *bris*. (Isadore was the father of Rose Kropsky Pels.) He encouraged my father to join the community, though as a lowly UVM instructor, my father once again could not pay. Izzy assured him that one day he and my mother *could and would do their fair share*. My parents flourished in this community: here, they connected and sustained lifelong friendships; and, yes, they did give generously whenever asked. And on my mother's untimely death in 1999, my father created the Eleanor Potash fund, through which her memory—and subsequently his following his death in 2011—would live on in good works, social action, and education here at OZ. For me, this generous spirit of community remains a guiding force. And if, perhaps, our family has paid back its original debt, I remain committed to paying forward to see that the values of welcoming, of inclusivity, and of Jewish values and Jewish community are sustained at OZ.

Over the past two years, I have been guided, first by a small team of Imagine 2025 visionaries, and more recently by an extraordinary Executive Committee (Yoram Samets, Judy Danzig, Bill Miller, and Lisa Glass Kornstein) and a Board (Rebecca Sherlock, Josh Kernoff, Gary Visco, Nat Lew, Suzanne Brown, Brett Smith, Mindy Evnin, Zoe Hecht (our youth representative)—and Trustees (Judy Hershberg and Harvey Klein). Through our shared dedication to OZ, we continue to imagine that, notwithstanding the last two years in which we've been largely apart, and tested, that this synagogue can and will continue to evolve to become a modern Center for Jewish Community."

Let's imagine, working together, we can build a thriving Center for Jewish Community, that by 2025, includes:

- Diverse, vibrant, and joyful spiritual and religious experiences, led by a Cantor, a Rabbi, and a dedicated lay leadership....conducted in our traditional and contemporary sanctuaries, our yurt, and our outdoor property
- A renowned and high-quality youth educational center, double our present size (Preschool and Hebrew School); and adult educational offerings that engage large numbers of our congregation
- A Center for Jewish Life that has an impressive yearly calendar of cultural events, including the arts, music, theater and history

- A Center for Social Justice dedicated to making our congregation, our community, and our world a better place through actions inspired by our Jewish values of *Tikkun Olam*, *Tzedek* ("Justice"), and *Gemilut Hasadim* ("Acts of Loving Kindness")

Looking forward, we have opportunities in the months ahead to invest in different facets of growing and securing our community's future. Together, we can and will raise the funds we need for a new rabbi, renovated sanctuaries, a preschool addition, a modern coffeeshop and more.

Each of us can be a model, like Isadore Kropsky and so many, many others over the years. It is our turn to copy their generosity, their goodness, and their heartfelt love for this community to shape OZ's future. Their memories live on as a blessing. Now it is our turn. And the time is now...

~ Jeff Potash
jeffpotash@comcast.net