

Cantor's Report for TBC Congregational Meeting May 2021

So, it was just one year ago that I had the pleasure of “meeting” (seeing) most of you for the very first time, on Zoom, at TBC’s congregational meeting 2020. And what a year it has been! In the next few minutes, rather than deliver for you a laundry list of accomplishments since our last Congregational Meeting in November, I would like to focus on just a few highlights from these past months and share with you some of my vision as we move forward out of our pandemic hibernation into the coming year and what that might look like at TBC!

I’ll begin with our newly invigorated, energized and engaged Religious School. Now for those of you who do not have children in the RS who are thinking now might be a good time for a bio break or a glass of wine, I encourage you to listen, and here’s why. As I said earlier in my opening D’var, this is about community – our ENTIRE community, and those of you who are not connected to our RS by having children in class have so much to give AND so much to get from interacting with our community of young learners, and I promise you, in the coming year, there will be plenty of opportunity to do just that!

Sunday June 16th was our last day of RS – our year-end celebration and teacher appreciation held in-person in our parking lot. I am happy to report that we had

almost 100% attendance that Sunday morning including returning students who had taken a break this year because of Zoom, and 3 students from a prospective family who will be joining our community in the coming weeks so that their girls can begin Hebrew learning over the summer! The morning was made possible in large part thanks to the tireless work of Marilyn Van Raalte who has been indispensable this year as our Education Consultant, and a very energetic group of parent and student volunteers who came early and stayed late to help with the logistics of set up, break down and schlepping. The excitement was palpable throughout the morning, and this speaks to the predominant feeling and energy in our Religious School. Our Education Committee was invaluable this year in making our La Briut Curriculum successful and in partnering with me to provide crucial feedback and ideas around our School, Family Services, Tot Shabbat and future Youth Events. Throughout the year, our attendance was well above average for a “normal” year on both Sundays and Wednesdays, and the Hebrew progress across the board for all grades has been tremendous. If you have attended any of our Family Services this year, you will surely have noticed how beautifully and enthusiastically our students have led us in many of the prayers each month. This enthusiasm is a direct result of our teacher’s dedication and commitment to our young learners. The lengths to which each of our teachers

went this year in support of their students is truly inspiring. I am grateful, honored and humbled to be working with each of them, and extremely proud to report that I believe our teachers now feel a renewed sense of community, purpose and respect as valued and critical members of our community. It has been a privilege to teach and learn alongside them and I look forward to continuing to build and expand our school together. Most importantly, we all agreed early in the year that we must do all we could to re-establish a love of Jewish and Hebrew learning and a true sense of community in the school – goals that we most certainly accomplished!

Moving forward, we are so excited to already be planning for a return to in-person learning on Sunday mornings (9:30-11:30am) and Wednesday afternoons (4:30-6pm). I am delighted to be introducing Hebrew Through Movement, part of the Onward Hebrew Philosophy, to our Sunday morning Judaic curriculum which will reinforce a Hebrew-rich environment in our school and will no doubt be a FUN new way for our students to be exposed to contemporary Hebrew vocabulary. We will be working with Federation to avail ourselves of the Virtual Israeli Emissary program in the coming year, particularly for our students in grades 4-7. Over the summer, Ellie and I will be sitting down with each teacher to review grade specific curriculum for both Sunday and Wednesday, something

Marilyn Van Raalte and I have already begun putting in place. There is loads more to say about TBCs Religious School including details about our plans moving forward for additional TBC Youth Group planning, cross-congregational opportunities for mentorship and involvement, an expanded B'nai Mitzvah program, and the return of Family Education days and communal Shabbat dinners. In the interest of time, I will end by saying that registration will be going out in early June, and as of today I am anticipating at least 9-12 new students joining our school for 2021-2022! Which means there will be lots of opportunity to help over the summer cleaning and organizing that part of our building – a tangible act that allows all of us regardless of our connection to the school, to give, get and grow from engaging with TBC's Religious School.

I honestly do not have words to adequately express how moving and personally fulfilling it has been to lead my first in-person Shabbat services at TBC in our gorgeous courtyard. Hearing voices singing along with me, praying together on Friday May 14th and 21st nearly brought me to tears. Our return to communal prayer is another example of the very essence of Sacred Community – to pray as a Jew with friends and family next to each other and lift our voices together in song. If you have been a regular Shabbat service attendee over the past many months, you have no doubt seen how our worship has been enriched, even on Zoom by

consistently robust attendance from within and outside of our TBC family. And perhaps you have even taken pride in listening to our younger congregants lead us in prayer. This will only continue and expand as we return to praying in person together both outside in our courtyard and eventually, back inside our beautiful sanctuary. We have already begun planning how we can continue to include those who may wish to join us for services but are unable to do so in person, and as June mentioned, we look forward to welcoming everyone back in person for High Holy Days 5782, pandemic permitting of course!

In the coming months as safety allows, look for opportunities to sponsor special musical Shabbatot and Oneg Shabbat celebrations, to serve as a greeter to welcome people to our synagogue for services, to chant Torah, to learn about our liturgy and ritual, to share a communal Shabbat dinner together, to make Havdallah and then sip wine and nosh on cheese while the kids watch a movie in the sanctuary...

All this and so much more is available, possible and in the planning stages, provided you let us know you want it. Did you enjoy Chanukah Chavdalah under the Stars or our more recent Jazz Havdallah Happening? Would you like to see a community softball game and BBQ on the opening day of RS in the fall, or a

parking lot bouncy house carnival and cookout? Tell us! The most important thing you can do for TBC right now is to make your voices heard! Everyone received, or should have received, the recent community survey that June mentioned in her remarks. I know many of you have opened it and some have completed it, but not all. I cannot stress enough how crucial your participation in this survey is to the future of TBC. This is your opportunity to express your dreams, hopes, desires, concerns, wants and needs vis a vis your synagogue community and to have a real say in the direction we take moving forward. I spoke a great deal early last fall about our responsibility as Jews to participate in society by voting. The “get out the vote” effort in 2020 was unparalleled and look at the turnout we had. We have all seen what happens when one votes and when one doesn’t, when one’s voice is heard and when it remains silent. Your participation in this survey is no different. I along with the lay leadership of TBC will use the findings from this survey as our guide to shape our mission and our direction going forward in the coming year and into the future, and we want and need to hear what you have to say about that direction and that focus. This is a tool that we have employed to help better serve you. So please, I implore you, take a few minutes and complete the survey. And not just you, but your children as well. This is for the ENTIRE community, just like the giving of Torah at Mt Sinai was for all. If you started but

couldn't finish, please go back and complete it. If you opened the email but decided to wait until you had more time, now is the time! Your vote, your voice not only matters, it is also critical to the future of our *Kehillah K'dosha*, our sacred community. If you cannot find the email, let us know and we will resend it! We have even removed a couple of the early questions that may have added time to the endeavor so that you can get right to the questions that focus on the future of our congregation. So please, take a few minutes to complete the survey and ask your spouse and children to do so as well. The future of our Sacred Community depends upon each of you.

And part of that future of course is continued fiscal health, so I will turn things back over to June so that we can move forward to the business at hand. Thank you....