

June 2021

Dear Members of Kehillah,

First, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself. I am Jane Neely and, as of July 1<sup>st</sup> will become the new President of Congregation Kehillah. I have been an active member of Congregation Kehillah and involved with the board for several years.

We all owe a debt of gratitude to Gil Blumenthal for his steadfast leadership over these past two years. Despite the pandemic, we had another great year. Here are some of the highlights:

- We had an average of 65 people participating on Zoom for *Kabbalat Shabbat* services.
- Our High Holy Day services via YouTube had over 200 viewing screens.
- Well-attended classes and chat groups
- CK Book Group and Torah Talk continued via Zoom and TT will continue throughout the summer.
- We held eight *B'nai Mitzvah*, three Baby Namings and Memorial Services/*Shiva Minyanim* via Zoom.
- We had a fully functioning YEP! program online and added a *Tzedek* Teen Initiative program for our post *B'nai Mitzvah* students.

I would like to recognize how our wonderful Rabbi, Renee, our cantorial soloists, and the Board of Directors continued to operate and improve every aspect of Kehillah's digital environment. The amount of work and the time pressures were incredible. Equally praiseworthy was the way Zoom continued to be embraced by our community. Rabbi recognized that during the period of physical distancing, our community members were looking for additional ways to connect and push back the inevitable feelings of isolation. Her selfless response to the situation was to increase the number of programs and classes offered.

Looking back, it is hard to believe how our community has adjusted and evolved. There, however, will be new challenges this coming year. Of primary interest to all is when and how we will reopen our building. Our multi-disciplinary COVID 19 Task Force has been working to assure that best practices are observed. We must keep the best interests of all our congregants in mind, from our "at-risk" congregants to children whose learning and connection is paramount. YEP! will be resuming in person; services will be offered both in-person and via Zoom. We will keep you posted throughout the summer.

On a personal note, I am energized by the resilience of our community. Challenging times like these are telling, but our community has embraced the challenge and grown stronger with continued participation and enthusiasm. We must maintain this momentum as we enter our new fiscal year which begins July 1<sup>st</sup>. It is time to renew your membership and Kehillah's very survival depends on your continued support. You will notice that the board voted to not increase the dues once again this year. We also recognize that the financial commitment may be difficult for some, and we can work together, as we always have, to develop a financial plan that will take your cash flow needs into consideration. For those who can, please consider increasing your financial commitment to Kehillah. The upcoming year is critical for Kehillah and, as a small congregation, we have precious little room for a financial shortfall.

New this year, is a Voluntary COVID 19 Mitigation Donation option added to the Financial Commitment Form. We are requesting your help, as you are able, to help mitigate the substantial cost of reopening our building with new safety measures such as air scrubbers and partitions as well as the technology and staffing for hybrid services.

Yes, the upcoming year will be different and, in some respects, challenging but I am confident that with your help and participation we can make it another successful year.

I look forward to serving you as your President.

*L'Shalom,*

Jane Neely, President