

Congregation B'nai Israel

TEMPLE TOPICS



January 2006

1 Tevet – 2 Shevat, 5766

My Dear Fellow Congregants,

We begin the year 2006 with much excitement and anticipation. What an outstanding job our immediate past president, Michael Yoffe, did for two years! Like others before him, filling his shoes will not be easy. Michael was helped by many in our congregation and I thank those of you who have already stepped forward with some excellent advice and ideas for me. Michael was always the patient diplomat who built consensus and, together with many others, made our synagogue a welcoming, warm, inviting place for all.

There is no time to sit back and relax. Committees that have been active are now even more active. Those that have been dormant are now active again. New committees are being formed. While all that is happening, we are finalizing plans to have the parking lot refinished, investigating security options for the synagogue, watching an amazing increase in numbers and enthusiasm for our education program (for young and old alike), as well as in Sisterhood and Hadassah.

Recognizing everyone this month is impossible but each month, I would like to mention one or two who go “above and beyond.” Let me begin the year by thanking two women who are amazing leaders. Tina Lyon and Heidi Moss (with the help of so many parents, teachers and aides) have transformed our religious school into a dynamic, vibrant experience for our children. They have motivated and enabled the teachers. Each is devoted to providing the best possible educational experience so that our young members have a strong, sound Jewish base that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Tina and Heidi’s efforts represent the kind of work being done by so many other people. The bar is set high and we are all grateful.

Services that, in the past, might barely have a minyan are now seeing upwards of 50 people. Next month, the Board will hold a one-day Retreat with a facilitator coming from Birmingham, Alabama, thanks to the URJ. In the Spring, we will host a Scholar-in-Residence. There is an excitement throughout Temple B’nai Israel that is all but palpable. New members are joining our “family” and former members are returning to see what we are offering these days.

From Adult Ed to Brown Bag Lunches with the Rabbi, to Saturday Tishes, to our Saturday night movies, to our Friday evening services in a more Reform tradition, to Saturday morning services in a more Conservative tradition, to a playground and a tennis court, we are the biggest “small” congregation imaginable. Of course, this is all the “inside” stuff. Outside our walls, several of our members work at the local soup kitchen once a month, our Rabbi teaches a class at Converse College, and regularly writes columns for the Herald-Journal Newspaper. This tiny population of Jews that makes up less than 1% of the community has an impact far, far greater than its numbers. We are active, engaged, and committed to making our Temple and our community better and better.

I am honored to serve as your new president. Together with other members of the board who have stepped forward to give their time and resources, I look forward to a great year. Whatever ideas you have to offer, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Until next month, with warmest regards, I remain,

Sincerely yours and wish you Shalom,

Barry Nickelsberg

President

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