

Congregation B'nai Israel

TEMPLE TOPICS



March 2006

1 Adar – 2 Nisan, 5766

Changing Times

My Dear Fellow Congregants,

If I have learned only one thing in the last two months it's that nothing seems to stay the same for very long. Our Board of Directors seemed quite stable and then Andy Perlman accepted a new job in Atlanta. Of course, we all wish Andy and Leslie great success in their new adventure but what a great loss for all of us.

Almost on the same day as we learned that the Perlman's were leaving, Barry and Cheryl August (who moved from Vermont) joined the Temple and then so did Naomi DeAngelo (who moved from Florida) and Bei Ruetten (who moved from Montana) and so our sadness of loss is tempered by our joy of increasing our "family."

OK, so nothing stays the same but it's not always for the worse. Like the rest of Spartanburg, Temple B'nai Israel is growing. If we look at ourselves day in and day out, the changes are all but imperceptible but when we stand back and get some perspective, those changes are quite amazing...positive...wonderful.

Among our more perceptible changes was learning more about our own Leadership Development. On Sunday, February 12, David Cohen, a facilitator from URJ (who lives in Birmingham, Alabama) joined 19 members of the Board of Directors and many committee chairs to help us develop our short and long-term goals. We have incredible potential but realizing that potential requires change and while everyone wants progress, human nature detests change. Striking that delicate balance is no easy task but it can be accomplished and can be done with great success. Our workshop was a great step in that direction. By the way, Robin Berenson has been elected to fill Andy Perlman's seat on the Board.

One of our "problems" is that we already have what many other shuls someday hope to achieve: A beautiful facility, an active education program, a dynamic rabbi and an active and engaged congregation. As our facilitator, David Cohen said, "Your synagogue has a balanced budget? I don't know that I've seen one of those before." With all that going for us, why change? Well, with those things in place, we are able to "tinker" with the little things. The Ritual Committee is looking into the possibility of replacing our various prayer books with one, new book, such as the new Prayer book Mishkan Tfilah. Over the next few weeks, portions of that book will be used on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings to see how congregants like it. Rabbi Liebowitz thinks this could be a great addition to our services and one member has stepped forward and offered to purchase enough copies for the entire congregation. If you think that other congregations don't look upon us with some envy, think again. One of our greatest strengths is our volunteer

base which is as deep as it is wide. Each month I recognize one volunteer and in so doing, hope to thank all. This month, Marla Steinberg gets that nod. Last year, in celebration of our Temple's 100th anniversary, Marla spent days making matzah ball soup for several hundred people. During the High Holidays, Marla organized the fundraising campaign to renovate the parking lot. With a goal of at least \$18,000 to match the sisterhood's gift to the Temple, Marla and a host of others, including Junie White, raised over \$38,000! But it's not just the high visibility things that deserve mention and thanks. On Friday, February 10th, Marla helped NFTY in preparing for our first Tu' Bishvat seder. Among the things she did, Marla pitted all the dates and set out 50 seder plates. While some are recognized for the big things, Marla is consistently working behind the scene to make sure that all the "little things" that make a big difference, are done with style. When you go to thank her for her work and efforts, she becomes uncomfortable with the recognition. This thanks is not to make Marla uncomfortable, it is meant to show our appreciation for many, many jobs well done.

One other person who is often overlooked but deserves our thanks is our Administrative Assistant, Kelly Nester. From preparing all our printed materials to making sure that our buildings are maintained, our facilities are ready for our members and guests and that our Rabbi is ready for whatever comes his way, Kelly is ALWAYS there. When someone loves his/her job, it shows. Kelly is one of those people and we are very fortunate to have her dedication to her job and especially to our Synagogue.

Speaking of dedication, there was a time when getting a minyan for Friday evening services was no easy task. Those days are behind us as we average 25-30 people each Friday night. Now, we need to focus on our Saturday morning service. For the good of our Temple community, make an effort at least one Saturday each month to get to services...and please, bring a friend. Those services are as beautiful as they are inspirational. We are commanded to study Torah. Saturday morning is a great time to put aside all the "stuff" from the rest of the week and participate in the warmth and beauty of our heritage.

Finally, another place we need your participation is in our Choir. We have the talent, we have the voices, and we have the opportunity for volunteers to make a HUGH difference in our High Holiday services. Rehearsals are only one evening a week beginning about two months before Rosh Hashanah. Interested in joining one of the most spiritually moving groups during the most spiritually moving services of the year? Please call the Temple and let Kelly know that you'd like to be a member of this year's Choir. Yes, it's time for one more change...it's time to make our Choir as strong as the rest of our Temple's programs.

Until next month, with warmest regards, I remain,

Sincerely yours and wish you Shalom,
Barry Nickelsberg

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www.ourtemple.us