

## **President Michael Weingarten Erev Yom Kippur Message - 2013**

Good evening everyone and good Yom Tov! It's wonderful to see our Temple completely filled with most of our members and many visitors to worship together on our holiest day of the year. I am truly blessed to have the honor to serve as the President of the best synagogue in the lowcountry!

I want to first thank Twyla Sable, Pennie Meiselman and Judy Bluestone who were the co-chairs of our High Holy Days Committee. The enormous amount of time that they, our office staff, and the numerous congregant volunteers have spent to make the holidays special and beautiful is greatly appreciated by our entire congregation. The next time you're in the office, let the office staff how much they are appreciated. Thank you all for a job well done!

I also want to thank Rabbi Bloom for his relentless commitment and service to our temple. He is my friend, my advisor, my counselor and I am his. Over this last year, he and I have established a very close relationship discussing and sharing all aspects of temple life and always seeking out the best avenues to take to have our congregation to continue to grow and prosper. This year Rabbi Bloom is celebrating his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Rabbi and I couldn't have asked for a better partner. We're all very lucky to have him as our religious leader.

I also want to thank our CBY board of directors both last year's and our present board. Each and every one of them has taken a leadership role in keeping the wheels of our Temple running smoothly. Almost every committee and major function we conduct is either led or has the participation of one or more of our board directors all of whom contribute much to the prosperity of our congregation.

Last year at this time in my Yom Kippur speech, I laid out our plans for this past year and I'm very proud and pleased, although not surprised, that not only did we meet the expectations we had, but exceeded them in all aspects of synagogue life – religious, cultural and social as well as financial. We had a great year and I'd like to review with you some of the major achievements.

I announced last year that we were embarking on a five year strategic plan and not only did we complete it, but we are now in our first year of execution. One of the major focuses of the plan was to create an environment where sharing resources, both financial and people is the norm rather than the exception. To implement it, we created 6 councils of committees who have complimentary missions with each of them led by a member of your executive committee. The mission of these councils is to seek out opportunities for synergy and we're already seeing the benefits of that objective.

Of course, we need to maintain our beautiful building in tip top shape and we're always seeking opportunities for enhancements and improvements to our infrastructure while at the same time keeping our facility 'green'. Fortunately, our capital reserve fund enables us to do just that. The following are just some of the major additions we made this past year:

- Installation a new programmable thermostat system to save energy as well as making sure that each section of our building is at the right temperature at the right time.

- Just prior to these high holy days, we installed 2 supplementary air and heating units to make sure we can maintain even temperatures in our social halls and sanctuary.
- We purchased a beautiful new piano which we now have been enjoying at almost all of our services and a new stylish and comfortable bench in our foyer for visitors waiting for appointments as well as congregants waiting for rides or just resting.

We've also had wonderful visibility and recognition from our parent organizations as well as outside organizations. This includes:

- A director on the national URJ board and regional/national representatives on the WRJ board.
- We received the following grants and awards:
  - A \$1000 Belin award for the excellent programming in outreach and membership
  - A grant from URJ to fully fund locally a national program called 'A Taste of Judaism' for unaffiliated individuals in our community to learn more about Judaism.
  - A \$3000 grant from the BJH Foundation for Senior Services to continue to offer the wonderful programs we conduct for remote seniors, as well as our congregants, over the last few years. This is the third year in a row the BJH Foundation has recognized CBY with a grant from that organization which is quite amazing and an acknowledgement of the success of the programs.

Our mantra of Tikum Olum, 'Repairing the World' was taken seriously once again this past year including major contributions from our Tzedakah Fund for national tragedies including:

- Sandy hurricane
- Oklahoma tornado and
- Most recently a donation to the family of a youngster who was struck by lightning while attending a URJ camp this summer.

Whenever you make a donation to Tzedakah fund, you should be assured that your donations go to good causes and make a difference.

Our Religious School and our Youth Programs continued to be vibrant. We have approximately 50 children enrolled in our school this year and by the end of this fiscal year, we will have witnessed 11 B'nai Mitzvahs – enough for them to form their own minyon! Our NFTY group is quite active and along with Sisterhood, through CBY's Bellet Youth Fund, we awarded a scholarship for the attendance of one of our teenagers to attend the NFTY conference in California. On Erev Rosh Hoshanah, she spoke about what it meant to her and how it reinforced her commitment to Judaism. The Bellet family generously matches equally any donations made to the Bellet Youth Fund and is a good way to support sending our youth to NFTY conventions as well as URJ camps. This year we hired a youth advisor and an assistant to continue to grow our programs and welcome the 11 new B'nai Mitzvah children to the fold.

We've had many offerings of spiritual, musical and intellectual activities and events including:

- Hot topics held on several scheduled Saturday mornings which engage our congregants in many interesting and often controversial subjects.
- A lecture from a professor the Jewish Studies Department at the University of Charleston on the history of Jews in the South.
- With the hiring of David Kimbell as our music director this year, our congregant volunteers who participate in our holiday and Shabbat choir sound more and more like highly paid professionals rather than volunteers who generously give their time and efforts to enrich our services.
- Of course, the beautiful singing of our cantorial soloists, Adriana Urato and Jacquy Schmid, of course add tremendously to the spiritual feeling of all of our services. As many of you know, Jacquy will be retiring after 20 years of service to our synagogue. I want to personally and publicly thank her for her faithful commitment and dedication she has always demonstrated and the lovely music she has provided to us for all of these years. Thank you Jacquy!

To insure that our music program continues at the high standard we have all come to expect, after the holidays, I will be organizing a committee to make sure that our music program continues to thrive and give us spiritual enrichment for a long time to come.

We of course have a major concern to keep our congregants involved and active and to that end we conducted a very successful 'Back to Shul' day this past year where all committees had displays to let congregants know what their responsibilities are and encouraging participation in their activities. This year we will be offering a Leadership Training Class for congregants who would like, or already have leadership roles in CBY. The series of 6 sessions is an excellent way to assure that we have ongoing succession plans for officers, board members, committee chairs and anyone who wants to take a role in shaping the congregation's future.

We also focused on improving and documenting our administrative processes and procedures enable all of our staff to understand how our temple operates and make the execution of the processes easier. They included amongst other items:

- Development of an employee manual for all of our employees
- And the implementation of a formal employee evaluation process for all of our paid professionals.

Our affiliate organizations, the Sisterhood and Men's Club have supported CBY not just with exciting and enjoyable programs for their members, but financially as well. They consistently provided a smorgasbord of cultural, religious and social activities (and of course we can't forget the food!) that are complimentary to everything else we offer to our CBY family. Our Men's Club charity golf tournament not only is a great event for camaraderie and sometimes even good golf, but generously donates all the profits to both CBY as well as local charities such as VIM, Deep Well and Bluffton Self Help. This year's

tournament is on October 8 and is already sold out. The Men's Club also conducts social opportunities for their members and events for the religious school children. The Sisterhood not only contributes financially every year to our Temple, but as a member of the national WRJ their dues contribute to the many charities the WRJ supports. They organize our weekly Friday night onegs of which every board member is committed to host at least one, sponsor our community Seder, provide bereavement support, support a monthly community soup kitchen, manage our Judaica shop in our lobby and maintain our JRC library which houses many books and videos of Jewish interest. Once again, the Sisterhood and Men's Club will be jointly sponsoring a New Year's Eve party with a special surprise this year that should be great fun! Fortunately, both the Men's Club and Sisterhood had an increase in their membership this past year, but for those of you who are not members, I urge you to join to make them even stronger. They make our congregation stronger and it's the right thing to do.

Lastly, I want to speak briefly about what keeps the wheels on our synagogue running and that, of course, is how we finance and execute everything we do. Our fundraising efforts were exceedingly successful this past year and helped substantially in enabling us to finish the year with a slight surplus. The Jazz Concert was fantastic and we're having an encore performance this year on October 27. Both the Friends Campaign and our sold out gala/auction exceeded budgeted targets. Our 92<sup>nd</sup> St Y program was consistently well attended by both congregants and non-members and also contributed significantly to our treasury. This fall we're expanding the program with six offerings and hope to be able to offer as many in the spring. I hope all of you will attend to support the temple and enjoy the stimulating presentations. Last fiscal year we welcomed 16 new member families with a number of new families who have already joined since July. We are now at an all-time high with the total number of residents/affiliates/associates now at 283!

Both to continue to offer all of the wonderful religious, cultural and social programs I've reviewed with you today, and to realize the vision we have for the future, we need to have sufficient resources to maintain what we now have and expect, and our ability to continue to grow. If you have an interest or talent to offer, don't wait to be asked, but volunteer your services. If you don't know what needs to be done, give me a call or send me an email and I'll be happy to get you involved! If we are being realistic, we must acknowledge that regardless of how we request financial support, a member contributes to the congregation to the best of his or her ability. Understanding that, we work very hard every year, as we have done this year, to make sure we have a balanced budget to avoid deficit spending. Our dues structure covers roughly 60% of our committed requirements to maintain our operations. We have approximately 50 children in our religious school and have a very strong commitment to make it affordable to all. To do that we subsidize approximately 50% of the cost of running our school from our operating budget. We have, and should have a very strong commitment to offer a robust religious school program and make sure all of our children can attend. Our youth is the future of Judaism and we need to support them to the fullest. At the same time, we have an aging population and we can't forget their needs. This year we will be exploring programs and services that can address those needs.

So where does the remaining funding come from? We have an Endowment Fund from which the interest earned contributes directly to our operating budget. As the fund grows, it potentially can

be a great source of revenue over time. Please consider contributing to the fund now or include it as a bequeath in your estates. Our very successful Fund Raising Program offers social and cultural events that are not only intellectual and fun, but help support our financial needs. We are continuing to examine ways to support our Temple from sources outside of our membership. Approximately 30% of the attendees for our 92StY Program are not CBY members and come from the local community. We are hoping that our upcoming Jazz Concert on October 27 will have over 50% of the attendees coming from the local community. Our Ad Book, which generated an all-time high in revenues for this year's edition and is included in the back of our Family Directory, is another source of income from primarily outside sources. Please make sure to thank any vendor who supports us, and let them know that their advertisement is appreciated and that we aggressively promote their goods and services to our congregation. One easy and painless way all for all congregants to help raise money is through our Amazon program. Any time you purchase something from Amazon, go to our web site first, click on the Amazon logo and make your purchase as usual. Amazon gives us a rebate for every purchase and in the last several months, we've received over \$200 per month. The Publix fob program is another way to raise funds. Every time you shop at Publix, swipe the Publix fob we provided for every congregant and we receive a rebate specifically for our Religious School from Publix. Last year the total amounted to over \$1000. If you don't have a fob, stop by our office and pick one up. We will continue to examine ways to generate funds from outside of our membership in order to help keep our dues at a reasonable rate.

The most critical and largest component of our financial efforts in this upcoming year is still our Friends Campaign, which is now beginning for this fiscal year. In our upcoming monthly Tidings, you will be able to read some of the new and innovative incentives to make this campaign as successful as possible. I want to thank all of you who generously participated in the campaign last year and hope you will maintain your level of contribution for our coming year and even increase your contribution by 10% if at all possible. Last year the participation of our resident families in our Friends campaign increased by 20% over the prior year with many affiliates and associates contributing generously as well. This year, we hope to substantially increase that number, as there is still a lot of room to get to 100% of all member families. Every member of our Board of Directors has made a commitment to support the campaign, including of course Janet and myself who have already made our donation to kick the campaign off. To those of you who have never contributed to Friends, I urge you to consider even a small donation to help CBY. This is your Temple and every additional dollar we raise makes a difference. If we want to continue to grow our programs, subsidize our religious school, help support our youth by providing assistance to send them to Jewish camps and NFTY conclaves, increase our program offerings, along with the many things other things we want to achieve now and in the future, we need everyone's support. Every one of you has a stake in our Temple, a place where Judaism is fostered and maintained in the lowcountry.

In the parsha Ki'Tavo in the book of Deuteronomy, we are reminded of coming out of 40 years of wandering in the desert and arriving to the Land of Canaan, The Land of Milk and Honey. The parsha continues in reminding us that we have to be good children, be respectful of our earth, share our benefits with the less fortunate, eat certain ways, and donate  $1/10^{\text{th}}$  of our fortune every three years.

For many of us here today, we journeyed through life for 40 years, some more, some less, until we found our Land of Milk and Honey, our Paradise, this place we call the Lowcountry and the home we call Congregation Beth Yam. For us to continue to sustain and enjoy the benefits of this wonderful place we call home, we need everyone's support – religious, cultural, social, and very importantly financial. Tomorrow night at the conclusion of Neilah, we will hear the last sound of the shofar, and that is the *tekiah gedolah*, that very long last blast. The *tekiah gedolah* is the sound of vision. I know that especially at this time, one vision all of us have is for peace in the middle east without any further loss of life and that all of our brethren there and throughout the world can feel safe and secure. I hope another vision all of you have is to support our temple to the fullest. Volunteering to do even one thing to enable us to continue to execute all the events and programs I spoke about to you today. Financially support the temple to whatever level you can afford and even a little more. It's only then can we reach our fullest potential and proudly say with conviction, we belong not just to the best temple in the lowcountry, but to one of the best temples in all of our country!

I am very proud to have the opportunity to serve another term as the President of this wonderful congregation and look forward to working with all of you this year to move forward to our future. On behalf of Janet and myself, we wish you L'shana Tova Tikatevu v' Tikatemu. May you all have a sweet, healthy, and prosperous year and may all your names be inscribed and sealed in the Book of Life.

Shalom