

Rosh Hashanah Remarks  
September 8, 2018  
President Judy Bluestone

I once knew a mayor of a small American city who used to say “progress is fine as long as it doesn’t involve change.” H-m. How does that work when progress means to advance, move toward a goal, to develop, to unfold? Every definition implies forward motion. Congregation Beth Yam in its almost 40 year history exemplifies such forward motion.

In 1981, a small group of Jewish Hilton Head residents, visionaries you might say, agreed that there needed to be an organized Jewish presence in their newfound paradise. They incorporated as the Jewish Community Association, held services at the First Presbyterian Church, established a religious school and started the quick march forward which has brought us to this day. And how we have progressed!

Look around you...

In 2009 we dedicated this building to replace the small structure built in 1990 whose sanctuary held about 150 people. We enlarged our offices and our gathering places enabling us to accommodate close to 300. Our tiny kitchen was replaced by a state of the art facility with storage. We have enhanced our building with beautiful art - the David Klass menorah, the specially commissioned *megillah*, beautifully designed ark doors displaying the talents of our member Angela Misthal, lovely art pieces by member Shari Farbstein, housing for our beloved holocaust Torah and display cases for an ever changing Judaica collection...all fulfilling the Torah’s commandment that our *mishkan* be beautiful.

Our early membership was essentially Hilton Head residents and snowbirds who enjoyed connecting with the Jewish community when visiting their favorite resort. Now, a growing number of our active membership live in Bluffton, Sun City and beyond. Our membership committee reaches out and works hard to integrate new members into the life of CBY.

While our religious school has educated and trained Jewish youngsters since CBY’s early days in the low country, since 2009 our children study in a dedicated wing. Their curriculum is contemporary, our teachers dedicated, our principal professional and the opportunities that are provided by our Board and generous donors ensure enrichment to their curriculum...Camp Coleman, a URJ camp to which all of CBY campers receive partial scholarships and an opportunity for our high schoolers to experience the March of the Living, underwritten by caring members, and ensuring that they appreciate our peoples’ journey from the darkness of the Holocaust to the light and miracle of Israel. By the way, not only children study for b’nai mitzvah. This past year, six CBY women prepared and became *b’not mitzvah* on this *bima*.

Our committees which numbered very few in the early days, and focused mainly on social/fundraising events and outreach to unaffiliated Jews, have now grown in number and depth... adult education offering outstanding programs to teach and advance understanding of our unique history and contemporary thought, our Social Action committee, the conscience of CBY, the Care Committee which reaches out to our members and even unaffiliated Jews on the island in times of health concerns and crisis, our fundraising committee which tries to emphasize the fun part of fundraising, And, we can now stream services and special events in our sanctuary. We are the central address of the Jewish community of Hilton Head and while we are helping so many outside of our Jewish world we know that as Jews we have a responsibility to stand up to local threats and educate the community. Take the recently formed **Lowcountry Coalition Against Hate**. We take Hillel’s words to heart “If I am not for myself then who will be

for me but if I am for myself alone what am I?" but when we also know that "*Al Ta'amod al Dam.....we cannot stand idly by...*"

Music...when Beth Yam was young we had a succession of cantorial soloists adding the music in worship in many styles; and now we enjoy liturgical music sung by our dear Adriana Urato, daughter of one of our founding families singing music in, among others, rock, reggae, chasidic and classical reform style. Our music director David Kimbell joined our staff in 2009 and with the conscientious and persistent effort of Felicia Pascal expanded our High Holy Day choir to become our Shabbat choir who has undertaken a more challenging repertoire.

And, our Sisterhood and Men's Club, which serve CBY in so many ways provide an entry for new members to the social life of CBY while performing so many mitzvot seen and behind the scenes. We could not manage without them.

CBY's Board of Directors, eighteen CBY members elected by you, oversee our finances and our programming and with the Rabbi make sure that we are responsible and relevant.

But, ritual and the study of Torah inform everything that we do at CBY. Under the leadership of Rabbi Bloom and the Ritual Committee, CBY offers opportunities for each of us to grow Jewishly.

*Tikkun olam* is the conscience of Judaism, but the soul of our faith is study and Torah. This is what has made us unique among the nations. It is what has brought us here, this day, this hour to share in the time old process of reflection and renewal. Each year, the high holy days offer us the opportunity to search within ourselves, to reach out to one another and to undertake the process of *teshuvah*. Our new-ish High Holy Day machzor *Mishkan Hanefesh* is a true gift given to us by Reform Rabbis and scholars for it contains prayers and readings that speak to all of us in words we can understand. Please don't miss the opportunity to read and reflect.

So progress without change? Progress is change. But, what has not changed is the objective of our founders...to create a Jewish family on Hilton Head Island. Again, *shannah tovah tikoteivu v'tikoteimu*.