

President Bluestone's Yom Kippur Remarks October 8, 2019 (5780)

Traditionally, the president's Yom Kippur remarks are all about financially supporting the synagogue. Guess what! I'm a stickler for tradition but don't be looking for those little envelopes at your seats with the tabs to turn down.

Instead, here are the facts, folks. Today's unfortunate realities required us, like most synagogues and Jewish institutions, to underwrite a security presence during Shabbat and holiday services, Religious School and events advertised to the public. This and the customary cost of living adjustment for our staff required us to increase our dues this year. But, I'm sure that you agree this is a small price to pay for keeping our community as safe as possible and to keep the wheels turning at CBY.

Dave Solomon leads our creative fundraising committee working hard to come up with clever opportunities for fun and fundraising. Last spring our Semi-annual Gala brought much needed funds to our bottom line. In addition, many of you continue to enjoy our Dine Together program where Maury Fradkin and Neil Hilsen search out new and old favorite eateries providing camaraderie and a little bit extra for CBY's operating funds. What a great way for new and long time members to meet!

There are other ways to financially support CBY. We have a variety of restricted funds to which you can donate for happy and sad occasions. Our website makes it easy to choose from a dropdown menu a fund that appeals to you or matches the interest of the persons whom you are acknowledging and you can make the gift on line. What could be easier!

But, these events and your annual membership commitment do not cover our expenses including the cost of running our religious school 55% of which is supplemented by operating funds. We depend on our Friends campaign to fill the gap. Last year, our Friends Chairs Pennie Meiselman and Stan Bluestone reported a record campaign of almost \$80,000. They will be soon launching this year's campaign and we hope that you will respond as generously as last year. If you have never contributed, please know that no gift is too small (or too large) and you will feel so glad to be part of supporting our dynamic congregation.

Looking toward the future, CBY sagely created an Endowment Fund seven years ago to insure long term sustainability of our full service synagogue...which really is the Jewish center of the Lowcountry. The Endowment Fund creates a financial reserve to be used for special programs, emergencies or general operations. Chaired by Ted David with a board of trustees independent of the CBY Board of Directors, funds are invested in balanced mutual funds. Your gift can be a current contribution or a legacy. As a donor you will become a member of the Guardian Society. The Endowment Fund is still young but its growth in the years ahead will be helpful.

We have been so fortunate and very grateful over the years for a few programs instituted and fully underwritten at CBY by the overwhelmingly generous contributions of individual members and families. Last year at this service I announced a gift by the Aronson Family in memory of their mother Judie whose commitment to Social Justice took many active forms. Because of this it we were able to provide awards to deserving graduating seniors at Hilton Head, May River and Bluffton High Schools for their demonstrably active support of Judie Aronson's ideals. Many thanks to our awards selection committee chaired by Rich Moniuszko. In addition, the Judie Aronson Initiative will be hosting US Senator Tim Scott right here at CBY Thursday from 6:00-7:00pm for a lecture titled "The Importance of Civility in Public Discourse". Please plan on joining us.

Yes, you may be thinking that you know all about these things but, here is something that you may not know.

Music is a key (forgive the pun) to what makes CBY special. Our music program has had two components: The position of Music Director and our Student Cantor program.

For the past 8 years four members have partially funded the position of Music Director at CBY. David Kimbell's services to CBY go way beyond conducting our Shabbat and High Holy Day choirs. Recruiting choir members, working with Rabbi Bloom to select, secure and arrange the right music for services and special occasions, recruiting accompanists and other musicians when needed, rehearsing the choir, working with Adriana Urato our cantorial soloist and our Student Cantors...all central to our services and celebrations. That's just part of what David brings to us.

Another small group of CBY members has been responsible for funding our six year relationship with the HUC Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music Student Cantor Program. Student Cantor Olivia Brodsky is the third aspiring cantor whom we've had the pleasure of engaging through this program. Our first student was Nancy Dubin, followed by Daniel Geigerman. Olivia's contribution to our High Holy Day services and Shabbat services in her monthly visits to Hilton Head is "value added" to CBY and we have enjoyed and appreciated her music, enthusiasm and warmth.

In an effort to pursue funding and secure our relationship to this program, I formed a task group called Music Matters. To get the ball rolling, we received a large anonymous legacy gift which put us on the path to our annual Music Matters goal but for only one year. It is our hope that other generous private donors who love and appreciate the gifts that our Student Cantors bring to CBY will recognize how much MUSIC MATTERS to us and continue their participation. Thank you to those who have already supported Music Matters. Without others joining you, however, CBY may not be able to sustain our Student Cantor program in the future.

Through these "Yamim Noraim" (Days of Awe) Moses Maimonides, scholar, teacher, physician...has been quoted quite often. I'm taking my Maimonides moment with the following:

“... doing one mitzvah can tip the scales for us and the whole world toward the side of merit, leading to redemption and deliverance for ourselves and for others. So the Book of Proverbs teaches: A righteous person is the foundation of the world. That is, a person who has done what is right has tipped the balance for the entire world toward merit and saved it and because of this, it is a Jewish practice to give tzedakah generously, to increase acts of goodness and focus on performing mitzvot from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur more so than during the rest of the year.”

Thank you all in advance for putting CBY first on your list of mitzvot.

G'mar chatima tovah...May you be sealed in the book of life.