

President Margie Bogdanow

If my parents were able to see me now....
If your parents were able to see you now....
Or your grandparents.
Or your great grandparents.

Mine would be very proud.
My mother would be a tad nervous, but my father would be jumping out of his skin with excitement.
And, as a dermatologist he was protective of skin.

What about the Temple Isaiah parents?
And grandparents?
We are now approaching 50.

What would our parents think?

Fortunately for us, some of them are actually “you” and are sitting in the congregation with us today. Some of them have passed away and we miss them terribly – every day as individuals and on days like this as a community.

The rest of us are grateful beyond words for the vision and efforts of our founders those many years ago. Thank you.

And in honor of our founding, over the next year and a half we will celebrate in all kinds of ways using all of our senses. Keep your eyes and ears open for specifics.

So, how have we grown? What have we become?

I think for 49 we are in pretty good shape - but like all 49 year olds
- as those of us who have already passed that magic age know –
we must continue to take care of ourselves!

The past two years with our new Board structure, under the Leadership of Laura Gordon Fisher brought us to a new place administratively.

We began 49 years ago as a small group; we are now a community of more than 2400 individuals ranging from newborns to those in their mid 90's.
Look around and think about that.

And yet, until very recently, administratively, we were still operating as a very small organization.
That has changed.
We have now begun to function the way a larger institution should function in order to best serve the needs of the community.

However, the balance that we seek is to operate in an appropriately large way, and yet still maintain the feel of a small community.

Like in the theme song from the TV show “Cheers” – We want to be a place where “everyone knows your name”. How can we do that?

Fortunately, for us, Rabbi Jaffe is a master at that. Perhaps he can teach us.

And for those of us who struggle with names, we can still relate to each other as members of one community, one very large extended family.

Over the past two years the Board has been crafting a vision with the community. And that vision includes the overlapping of three things, 1) Judaism, 2) the Institution of Temple Isaiah, and 3) our Community and the people in it. Our goal is for everything we do to further tighten those connections so that everyone who walks into and through this building for any reason feels welcome and connected to Judaism, to one another and to Temple Isaiah.

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We have begun the move to a model of Congregational Education, with Marilyn Stern as our first Director of Congregational Learning. As a community of life long learners, we are looking forward to the possibilities that will bring us.

Over the coming years we are looking to develop a more comprehensive and coordinated learning experience for all in our community who desire that.

As this year begins, I invite each of you to think about what you want to learn.

Possibly things you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask, possibly things that you have just begun to question as you have grown older.

This is a long term endeavor for us and as you have these thoughts, please share them.

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We are developing into a more caring community. One of our newest initiatives is “Hineni” Here I am. Here we are.

And I cannot think of a more appropriate program to be speaking about this morning – as we will be reminded when we read Torah.

Hineni is our continued attempt to create a caring community by expanding the ways we care for and care about one another.

Many of us wish we could help those in our community who occasionally need help.

I also know that many of us could occasionally use some help.

As a community, we do a pretty good job when people have a major catastrophe, but imagine what it would be like if we could help one another when things were not so drastic – when someone needed someone to drive them to an appointment, to cook a meal, to walk a dog, to pick up something at the market.

Little things that can be so helpful.

I am not going into details here. But suffice to say, the opportunities that Hineini brings to us are endless.

So, I urge you to pay attention to the materials you receive, volunteer to help and I especially urge you to ask for help when needed. That is not something that comes easily to many of us.

Trust me, I know!

And yet, the community wants and needs to help one another.

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Our worship experience is continually being enhanced. This past year saw the introduction of the new LONG awaited prayer book, Mishkan Tefila into our community. It is a wonderful addition – and the combination of Mishkan Tefila, Rabbi Jaffe, Rabbi Brown and Cantor Doob has reenergized and reinvigorated our Friday evening Shabbat experiences. If it has been a while since you have attended Friday night services I encourage you to try it. You might like it.

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The Board is seeking to better understand the needs of our community financially and programmatically and to tie those things together.

Over the next years we will be working hard to ensure that our programs reflect what it is we truly believe in and to make sure that this will always be a community where your ability to contribute financially has no bearing on your ability to be a part of this community.

And I mean that. And I recognize that this may be a difficult and challenging economic time for many in our midst.

Please know that Ruth Fleischmann, our special arrangements chairperson, has a sensitive ear and a heart of gold. Try not to be embarrassed or afraid to be in touch with her if you temporarily need help with your dues.

We operate on the assumption of good will and are aware that life has ebbs and flows.

We know that, in our community, financially, as in every other way, at various times, there are those in need and there are those who have more than they need and together we make it work.

And we have learned that it isn't only the big things that matter.

It isn't only the wonderful educational opportunities that we offer, it isn't only the wide range of programs we have, the reenergized worship, the social action activities we are involved in.

It is also about the little things, the smile when you walk in, the sign to tell you where to go, the shoulder when you need to lean on it, the hug when there are no words, the introduction when you have never met or when you have met several times but you just don't recognize someone or you can't remember their name.

We must all continue to work on those smaller things, those details.

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What you just heard are a very few sound bytes about Temple Isaiah at age 49. There is so much more. And much of it is in the Bulletin.

Along with all of our activities, this month's bulletin has a special thank you to all of our staff who assist us in making our experience here possible. I hope that you will read it and rather than thank them out loud now, I encourage you to thank them personally. It will be much more meaningful to all of them and to you.

What is not in the Bulletin this month is a thank you to each and every one of you for your individual contributions to this community. That list is almost endless but my time up here is not – we are here to worship - so to all of you – please know that your time, your financial contributions, all of your efforts are noticed and are appreciated. Thank you.

And I urge all of you, whatever your involvement was last year, to consider again ways in which to become more engaged and connected in and to this sacred community. Please know that whatever it is that you are interested in or need, from the sublime to the ridiculous, there is a place for you to participate here.

As Confucius said – many, many moons ago.

I hear and I forget

I see and I remember

I do and I understand.

So, I invite you to Do and Therefore to Understand Temple Isaiah in its 50th year.

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I know that my parents would be incredibly proud of me today and I believe strongly that Temple Isaiah's parents would be equally proud of our community today.

And because, as I have learned and said, it isn't only the big things, it is also the little things, the details that matter - my mother would be particularly proud that I put on a shirt that did not have a stain on it this morning and my father would be proud that I am wearing a Freedberg jacket – a jacket made by the clothing company that his father founded in 1934 although the jacket is not actually from 1934.

And in the same way that I feel my parents' presence here this morning, I think many of us feel the generations that have come before us in this sanctuary and in our own personal lives and may we ALL go forth into the New Year with their support and encouragement.

Michael, Dan, Alyssa and Matt join me in wishing all of you a Shana Tova. May the year 5769 be filled with good health and sweet things for each and every one of us, our families, our communities and the world, and when the inevitable difficulties arise, may we be there for one another.