

Rabbi's Report to Congregational Meeting May 4, 2008

Beth David Synagogue is blessed with a strong and supportive board of trustees, a firm tradition of past leadership, and beautiful and active and contributing members of our congregation – families, and extended families, with whom I have privilege to work and live.

Susan Nehmen asked me to give a report on the activities of the Synagogue over the past year. Once a year, I want to tell you about all the things that we do. It's not that there aren't things that we don't yet do, that we need to do – there are lots of things that we need to do, and many things we need to do better. But we produce and offer an incredible variety of programs and services here at Beth David. Once a year, I compile a list, and tell you about them. It's long. So please settle in, and just allow yourselves to feel *nachas* from your shul which is so grand.

It is my pleasure to report on some of the
Highlights of this year, 5768

When I first came to Beth David, 17 years ago, we claimed 325 member households.

Today, we have approximately 400 member households w/ 190 children.

We had 12 Bar Mitzvahs since last May

We have 14 kids in our Senior Confirmation Class

Over the past year, we've gained 32 new member households. We have lost some families through natural causes, and moving away – As far as I know; no one has resigned in a huff during the past year.

And have suffered 12 deaths of members. This year, we lost Sammy Anflick, Steward Schall, Joanie Wasserkrug, Don Koenig, Arnie Cherson, Denise Somekh, Rio Hoff, Harvey Yoffe, Rosemary Druskin, Al Herman, Robert Levitt, and Lee Kay. We are saddened and diminished by their deaths as well as by the passing of others in our extended family, siblings and parents of members. We pray that their memories be a blessing, and that God will comfort their families.

We celebrated this year, nine weddings of members or children of members, and we celebrated the births of eight children of members, and many more, grandchildren of our extended family.

We made about five new Jews this year, but our mikveh was instrumental in making many more from Raleigh and Chapel Hill and Winston Salem and Temple Emanuel in Greensboro

There have been a wonderful variety of special and ongoing programs at Beth David this year, spearheaded by energetic volunteers:

Book Sale- a cultural and fundraising event, chaired Rose Ackermann and Kathy Kraus and Judith Altman, and involving tens of members of our wearing blue aprons. I cannot say enough, how good it makes me feel when I meet gentiles outside of the synagogue, and they say – “Oh I know your church – that's where the book sale is.” It makes me proud for us to be seen as the People of the Book.

Mishloach Manot, a feel-good and Jewish holiday observance and fundraiser, chaired by Michelle Hanley and her committee, again, with tens of volunteers involved in packing and delivering, and feeling connected and engaged with Jewish life and the synagogue.

The **Jewish Community Directory**, headed up by Susie Nehmen and Neil Kaye, continues to be a basic community resource and an important fundraiser for our congregation.

Another, current, fundraiser chaired by Susan Robinson and her committee is the dinner honoring **Leonard and Tobee Kaplan**, scheduled for the 18th of this month.

We have enjoyed monthly **Chazak** events- movies, speakers, outings, for adults over 55, headed up by Judy Hyman.

Weekly **Vatikim** Meetings – Sylvia Silver started Vatikim 14 years ago, and with her passing last year, Naomi Kaplan took the reins to continue this important program. We continue to make use of a generous gift from Lou and Sylvia's son to continue Vatikim programming in Sylvia's memory.

The flowers which grace our bimah every Shabbat are also paid for from a fund which Lou established to honor Sylvia.

Our **chazzan** for High Holidays, Rabbi Moshe Silberschein will be returning to us this Rosh Hashana. Thanks to Ken Miller and Aliya / Religious Life committees for making our beautiful services possible.

Tamar Rudavsky came to our shul in September and lectured on Jewish Philosophy and Maimonides –she was the **George and Muriel Hoff Visiting Scholar**.

Bernie and Nancy Gutterman have also established a fund to make visiting scholars available to our synagogue, and we hope to bring a variety of visitors to our shul next year – Gail LeBauer has agreed to chair the visiting scholar committee, so please offer your suggestion of outstanding teachers to her. We also hope to bring a major cantorial concert at Beth David in the fall.

Israel Scouts- Are making a return to Greensboro, after a hiatus of a two years, on June 15th coming to sing and danced for us, arranged by David Kriegsman.

In addition to my own pastoral visits to **Abbotswood**, Risa Hanau is heading up a monthly mincha service there – volunteers come from Beth David to create a minyan together with residents there.

In past years, Risa and Gail LeBauer have led **bereavement support** groups in our congregation, and I hope that we will be able to sponsor another group this coming fall.

Men's Club programs – under the leadership of president Robert Chandler - Mothers' Day brunch next Sunday, a bike ride, a Timco Visit, the golf outing with Temple Emanuel Men's Club, Veterans Day Shabbat, Men's Club Shabbat, we participated in the world-wide tefillin

wrap, sent out, Yom Hashoah candles, a great program on the Constitutional Law and Moral Choices, and more. Robert has served well as the Men's Club President for two years, and we welcome Keith Ross as the incoming president for the next two years.

Sisterhood, under the leadership of Sara Jacobs, continues to maintain our Gift shop, an important source of Jewish objects to enliven Jewish home life in our community. The gift shop was managed this year by Susan Coseo, and staffed by volunteers Sonya Lucas, Eilat Shavit, Linda Baggish, Zmira Sabbah, Lina Carvajal and others.

Sisterhood arranges and delivers shiva trays, and held an apple recipe baking event around Rosh Hashana time. I look forward to Phyllis Jerome's leadership as Sisterhood president, next year.

Chesed Committee baked and cooked and prepared and visits shut ins, and new mourners - people who need a meal prepared and delivered. Chesed means kindness, and although our community has always rallied around our own families in need, the Chesed committee formalizes this process to make sure that no one will fall through the cracks.

Dani Gray and Rachel Darrow and Rachel Wolf and Jen Sadock have set up a new committee – **YAFE** – Young Adult and Family Events – to engage young couples and families – they have sponsored a “pancakes and pajamas” program which brought out 70 young people, and monthly Tot Shabbats and are planning – a wine tasting, specifically for **young families** who we hope will become active Jewish families and engaged synagogue members.

We've programmed a number of wonderful **special Shabbatot** – Our college kids spoke about their Jewish experiences on their various campuses; five kids returning from a semester at the Alexander Muss High School in Israel spoke about the field trip and the Jewish History they had learned there; USY joined us when they hosted a Carolina-wide Shabbaton; and we have offered our prayers and good wishes at send-offs for the Young Leadership Mission, AHA kids going to Israel, the Federation Seniors trip, and as every May, the B'nai Shalom eighth graders traveling to Israel. ,

Shabbat dinners – some catered and some in-house, with the help of so many, including Diane Weinstock and Robin Lecin, and Frank Nelson, and of course, our synagogue's participation in the national initiative - Shabbat Across America when we were served by our board of trustees. Robin also organized our annual **kugel bakeoff**.

Bobby Shuman again chaired our **Tikun Olam Society** – Social Action committee, arranging, together with Joanne Steele, opportunities to feed the homeless, collecting food year-round, delivering Meals on Wheels, participating in Mitzvah Day, and being part of our social support of the wider Greensboro community. Although not directly a synagogue –sponsored program, I am proud to say that Sylvia Berkelhammer, a member of Beth David, has chaired the annual Christmas hospital effort for over 25 years

We continue to offer to the community at large, **Israeli folk dancing**, led by Susan Feit and Janis Fields, in our gym. This year, we also hosted several workshops here by well known dance instructors from Israel.

Community Second Seder –150 participants this year, for some it's the only seder they have, for others, just an opportunity not to wash dishes. It was hosted by our president Susan Nehmen.

We held our annual **Chanuka party** again this year, well attended by members of our community – Beth David Members and Guests.

Our **Chevra Kadisha** continues to offer chesed shel emet – true, ultimate kindness to members and families in our community. Frank and Ellen Nelson continue to chair our chevra kadisha, and Judy Hyman has taken on the responsibility of scheduling shomrim to sit with bodies, a mitzvah that we weren't always able to do in the past.

We continue to open our synagogue to tours from churches **and non-Jewish groups** –We are developing a relationship with St. Francis Episcopal Church on Lawndale – they came to visit us last month, and I hope to arrange a reciprocal visit just before or after the summer. .

Our **bulletin and web site** continues to be collected, edited, and published and maintained by volunteer par excellence, Robin Lecin. We are very grateful to her for all the hours and effort that she puts in on behalf of Beth David. The website was redone this year, thanks to help from Susan Polinsky. If you haven't logged on recently, it's worth a look, just to shep nachas from your synagogue.

Our bulletin is mostly published online, on our website, yielding an enormous saving of paper and expense. We have also begun recycling within the synagogue offices and school and kitchen, and have even dabbled in encouraging fluorescent light bulb use among our member families, in an effort which we began on Chanuka, called Make Chanuka Green This Year.

Last year's and this year's **Tikkun Leyl Shavu'ot**, our Shavu'ot Torah study sessions, were held here, together with Temple Emanuel .Both were well attended, and by all accounts, successful and fun and opportunities to bring the community together and to learn Torah.

We also hosted a number of **community events** here at Beth David, which were not initiated or executed by our congregation:

- Brad Hirschfield, from CLAL, spoke here about his new book – [You Don't Have To Be Wrong For Me To Be Right](#);
- We held a major community forum, sponsored by the Greensboro Jewish Federation, on the book – [The Interfaith Club](#) – the speakers didn't show in time, and the priest, the imam and the rabbi had our own interfaith forum, having a lot of fun with the 400 people who came, until the real speakers showed up;
- We hosted last week a moving service and speaker for Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, and next week,
- We will again host the community Yom HaZikaron Service, to remember and honor Israel's fallen soldiers, prior to having several festive events commemorating Israel's 60th birthday, including a screening of the classic film, [Cast a Giant Shadow](#), with Kirk, Yul, John, Angie Topol;
- And of course, B'nai Shalom events, like the Chanuka Show and Graduation.

Mark Goodfriend, in his interim position as our Educational Director, maintained a happy religious school of about 25 kids, who have moved ahead in Hebrew and Jewish learning. This coming Shabbat will be Religious School Shabbat and you are all invited to see just what our religious school kids can do.

In our adult education, **adult education** Classes – Hebrew and Torah in its widest sense

- Harvey Tilles continues to lead a popular weekly **parshat hashavua** study
- Yudit Natkin continues to be one of our most talented teachers in our community, leading a group of intrepid **Torah** students during weekday morning study
- We offered a **Judaism 101** course to the general community, and again had 60 adult students, most of whom were not Jewish. This year, Boaz Avraham-Katz taught that course.
- We offer a year-round **advanced Hebrew**, also taught by Boaz.
- **Book review** group, facilitated by Sara Malino

- We hosted a wonderful **exhibit** about the Kindertransport, in December and January. Many people saw it, spent time reading the posters and looking at the pictures, and it added to our mission of being a catalyst to help people grow as Jews and as human beings. I would love for our walls to be regularly covered with changing exhibits, and we are looking for someone to take that on as their niche at Beth David.

- Mark and I together taught a class to **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Families**.

- Rick Schneid taught a course in **Jewish History**

- Our last fifteen member Adult Bat Mitzvah Class morphed into a Bible Reading and Study Group, which we now call **B'not Torah** – we meet monthly to read and discuss a book of the Tanach. We finished Jeremiah this last month, and are on to Ezekiel and beyond in the months ahead. We welcome newcomers at any time.

Rita Moskowitz came to me with a proposal to create a new **Adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah class** – we have been meeting weekly, on Wednesday evenings from 7:00 – to 8:30, getting started – there are almost 20 members of the class, ranging from total beginners to advanced students, and we are looking forward to a group Bar Mitzvah sometime next year.

Our first-ever **Beth David Pilgrimage to Israel** last June, was chaired by Alan and Merrienne Leff – 11 of us went, we had an unforgettable experience, and I hope there will be more Beth David Israel trips in the future.

We are sending 15 campers to **Ramah** this year, and around 10 staff, plus CJ, and Israel programs. Last year, The National Foundation for Jewish Camping, partnering with the Federation and Beth David and Temple Emanuel, offered our community the opportunity to participate in a wonderful program, allowing us to offer **incentive scholarships** of \$1000 each to first year campers at Jewish educational camps. A sizeable number of families took advantage of these grants, this year and last, - this year, program is extended to second year campers as well.

In addition, a wonderful scholarship program has been established in memory of **Stanley Shavitz** to help send kids to Camp Judaea, and we hope to use these funds to greatly increase the

numbers of our families who benefit from Ramah and CJ experiences. We, Beth David Synagogue, also offer assistance scholarships to children of our members through the Beth David Ramah Scholarship Fund. I do want to note that this fund was grown, as a result of Shira Chandler's generosity, when she indicated that gifts in her honor be made to the Beth David Ramah Scholarship Fund.

-We send 19 kids to the **American Hebrew Academy** and hope to send another 4 or 5 freshmen next year.

-We have a **USY** group that meets here, and sends kids out to meet other Jewish kids throughout the Southeast. This year, besides the NC Shabbaton, our kids ran a great Thanksgiving pie baking tzedaka project, and of course painted the youth lounge, guided by Mark and Rachel Goodfriend. And for the first time this year, we had a sizeable group walking in the annual community Winter Aids Walk.

We did not have a **March of the Living** contingent this year, but I hope to accompany a large group of our kids to Poland and Israel this coming year.

Mark Davidowitz is chairing a Federation community mission to Israel in early November – I'll be going, and I hope that many from our Beth David family will join us to celebrate Israel's 60th.

A shining star aspect of our synagogue remains our **Tefilla** – our worship services – On regular Shabbat mornings without a Bar Mitzvah, it's common for us to have 120 Jews in attendance. Thanks to **Phil Silver**'s teaching and rehearsal as well as his skills in hunting down people and assigning them parts, we have wide participation in leadership of services. Guests tell me all the time – *Rabbi, If we had a shul like this where I live in Boca, Chicago, Philadelphia, I'd come to shul.*

We have a wide variety of teens and adults and young children **leading services** and learning ashray and anim zemiroth and reading Torah and Haftorah and giving d'var torahs.

And then there is the growth that is individual – not public – members of our shul learning Hebrew and putting up mezuzas and learning how to do havdala at home. Much of this is due to the work and encouragement of the Religious Life under the leadership of Ken Miller.

We are continuing our practice of "**Initiated aliyot**"- Risa Hanau makes calls to people who are not necessarily regulars, and offers them aliyot on each coming Shabbat.

We continue our custom of setting aside one aliya for all the people who have **yartzeits** during the coming week. Thanks to Adele Weinstein who makes those calls and gives people the opportunity to have an aliya and to say kaddish.

Eight children were admitted to the **Ashray Academy** this year.

Purim services/**megilla reading** this year were joyous filled with young children and families and great fun, and were followed by our annual **Purim Seuda** banquet with a latke/hamantachen debate chaired by Rick Schneid.

Weekday 5:45 **minyan** continues to be strong, with a good core of regulars to support those who are in a year of mourning, or observing a yartzeit

We continue to celebrate uffruffs, baby namings, and significant birthdays as part of our Shabbat morning services. It gives us great joy to celebrate simchas in our sanctuary.

Thursday morning minyan has grown and is steady, thanks to Judy Hyman, who makes calls to sign people up for a Thursday morning a month. If you'd like to add that habit to your routine, we have wonderful Carolina blue minyan magnets to remind you when it's your Thursday.

We know that the Jewish People marches on its stomach – I am delighted that in addition to Bar Mitzvahs, a number of families have chosen to celebrate life milestones – anniversaries and significant birthdays, by **sponsoring kiddushes** in our congregation. Lotte Wertheim and Elsie Samet both celebrated their 85th birthdays with a kiddush in shul, but you don't have to wait until you are 85!

Due to some important cost-cutting measures in our shul, we cannot offer the same opportunity for fellowship and schmoozing over tuna salad that we once did – we are actually reduced to dry sponge cake and carrot sticks on some Shabbat mornings, so, I entreat you - please make your family celebrations joyous by sponsoring a kiddush for our community on Shabbat mornings.

We had a great sukka, and great programs in our sukka this year. We encourage families to have their own sukkot at home, but our large synagogue sukka continues to be a focus of educational and fun programs for youth and adults, as well as a place for a good afternoon l'chaim.

Our new **siddurim** are now two years old – we have used them and are starting to learn the pages, and getting to love them. They are still available for dedication and dedicatory bookplates – call the office or Joan Samet.

Booklets of transliteration For all of the prayers we sing and chant, on Friday nights, and on Saturday mornings, have been prepared by David Feinstein and Rabbi Sol Goldberg. These are tremendous important booklets, as we welcome an ever-growing number of visitors and families whose Hebrew reading skills are poor or non-existent. While Hebrew literacy is a goal for Jewish adults, we do not want the inability to read Hebrew to be a bar to finding meaning in participating in our services. When I hand out transliteration booklets on Friday nights, many people – guests, and members, are visibly grateful. These booklets, which took a lot of effort to prepare, are in use, but still in draft state, and will hopefully be final after the summer. Robin Lecin is helping with the layout and printing. I am grateful to them for helping to make our services accessible to all.

I also note that our membership forms have been completely redone by a committee of Merrienne Leff and Arlene Dolin and Adele Weinstein and others, and are now peppy and inviting and more easily used to by our office, and by committees who are looking to engage new members.

We honored Harry Samet and Barbara Teichman this year at Simchat Torah as **Chatan Torah** and **Kallat Bereshit**, and David Altman with the **Community Memorial Aliya** on Yom Kippur. I would like to honor more people in our congregation, seeing that so many do so much. Our ritual committee is considering ways to make that happen.

Last year, we began a new initiative of **Davening Enhancement**, and put together a group of some thirty people to work together in making our worship services more alive and engaging. We've met several times since then; we have introduced a lot of new melodies that have been mostly well received and we are working on training new adult shlichay tzibbur, members to lead our services. Sharon Kaiser is coordinating this committee, which we call Shira Hadasha, -A New Melody, and I am grateful to her for keeping me focused in this

Our **Keruv** committee working on issues of inclusiveness, specifically for families with non-Jews in our congregation. Has developed policies which will hopefully make people feel comfortable, and at the same time encourage families to increase their Jewish engagement. We have published a brochure, outlining our policies and outreach. The committee is now faced with the task of initiating programs to bring those families closer into the synagogue orbit.

In a similar vein, our Board of Trustees, read together a book by Ron Wolfson, called the Spirituality of Welcome, about how to make our shul a place where newcomers and old veteran members alike can feel welcome and needed. I hope that some of what we talked about will be put into practice by individuals and institutionally.

We received a grant of \$10,000 this year from the **BJH Foundation for Senior Services** to use for programming for senior adults. Some of those funds are already being spent on our senior activities, and I look forward to creative programming made possible for us with continued funds.

Finally, on a note of assuring financial strength for the future, Beth David is participating in the Jewish community-wide **Legacy Campaign**, which is a project of the Jewish Foundation of Greensboro, chaired by Jerry Pinsker. Cathy Levinson is chairing this Legacy campaign of publicity and solicitation, encouraging members of our Jewish community to make testamentary gifts to Jewish institutions in Greensboro and elsewhere. We hope that the results of this campaign will ensure continued viability of the synagogue, schools, camps and Federation which are central to our strength as Am Yisrael here in Greensboro, NC.

Wendy Rothstein joined our synagogue staff as Executive director. Her job is to help our synagogue grow administratively and programmatically, and financially. This is her first Beth David annual meeting, and I welcome her here tonight, and thank her for her addition to our staff and our synagogue.

We engaged a new bookkeeper this year, Lucy Smith, who is doing a great job straightening out our financial matters, and getting us on the right track fiscally.

Kathy Kraus, Sara Jacobs, Marc Samet, Stu Kaufman, Mindy Kutchei, Susie Nehmen and Josef Silverman have spent enormous amounts of time in the building, helping our skeleton office staff move forward. Barbara Teichman serves as a volunteer coordinator to get temporary respite and extra hands in the office. We thank these volunteers and leaders of our congregation for keeping us afloat.

Potential Growth areas:

Part of the ongoing mission of Beth David is the growth of Adult Jewish Study and observance. That is always on our agenda.

Adult ritual leadership – We have wonderful teens leading services, and we need to strengthen our own adult ritual leadership skills.

We face a challenge of **demographics**: Our congregation appears to be heavier in the after-50 cohort than the under-50 group. In addition, though I am far from a predictor of financial matters, it seems to me that **the economy** in Greensboro, in the Jewish community, in the nation, is becoming strained. And all surveys show that as a Conservative Movement, our population, the mainstay of our congregation, is graying. We need to thoughtfully set realistic goals for continuity, and for growth.

You will hear later in the meeting tonight about our **financial challenges**. We are making a dedicated effort to reduce our expenses where we can. Ultimately, we will need to plan our future financial stability and strength through endowments and fundraising. Over the past ten minutes or so, you have heard me describe an amazing array of programs and classes and services that our synagogue maintains. It is even more incredible that we manage to do this with a skeleton staff of two professionals, and two secretaries, and now an executive director. If we want to maintain, or expand the level and activity which we produce, we will have to find a way to be financially stronger.

One of the major effects of cutting costs will be felt in the educational and programming areas of our synagogue. You will hear that, that we are restructuring the position of Director of Religious Education and congregational Programming into two part time positions. One will be a kind of part-time “Youth Minister”, charged with leading the Religious School and youth programming, and the other will be focused on seniors’ programming, and Adult education. They will collaborate for family and synagogue-wide programming. I will supervise both these positions, and will continue to be integrally involved in all these areas. I think that this structure can work for us, if, of course, we have the right people for each position. We have some local candidates, but we have not made any decisions as to hiring as of today.

Mark Goodfriend served admirably in his interim position, and we are grateful to him for his work and for his presence in our community.

We engaged this year, in a search for a new **educational director** – a full- time person to lead our religious school and to create Jewish educational programming and learning for kids, young families, old families, extended families, singles, and adults of all ages. The challenge of finding the right person for this position, and of integrating and supporting this person into our

synagogue is great. Mindy Kutchei and Joyce Shuman served as the chairs of the search committee, and we are grateful for their work, and the work of the committee members, in this area. Ultimately, we did not find that right person, and so we will be restructuring for the coming year.

I do want to say, though, that although the division of that educational position into two part-time pieces will work for this year, and perhaps for a short-term future, Beth David needs a second full-time, Jewish professional who is deeply steeped in Jewish culture and ritual., who can serve as an energy source and a teacher of tradition for our community of 1300 souls in our own synagogue, and many more in the larger community. Putting that role on the shoulders of one person cannot ultimately be successful.

We do face a challenge of creating **strong ongoing lay committees**, particularly in the areas of Education in all aspects – adult, religious school, and family ed, congregational programming and **Youth**. Beth Socol has taken the lead in accepting some of these portfolios, but more of us need to step forward to make this our mission at Beth David.

For many years, we had a mashgiach and **kitchen manager** on staff, to ensure the Kashrut and safe running of our kitchen. Joy Thomas is on our staff very part time in this position, and does a wonderful job preparing kiddushes, breakfasts, shopping, and creating opportunities for us to enjoy eating together. We are also running with the help of two very dedicated and overworked volunteers, Robin Lecin and Diane Weinstock, with help from Frank Nelson. The kitchen is part of our building with a very heavy investment in equipment and infrastructure, and an integral part of our synagogue program. We will need to figure out how to run our kitchen in a cost effective way, to maintain our ability to serve kosher food at our synagogue functions.

Another challenge which we face is that of wealth, not financial wealth, but programmatic wealth. We are simply producing too much. Between the institutions in our community, temple Emanuel, the federation, Hadassah B'nai Shalom, Jewish Family Services, American Hebrew Academy, and ourselves, there is so much sacred envy, so much good competition, that we are all offering more programs than it is possible to go to, and many of them duplicate each other. Perhaps it is time, or perhaps the time will be soon, for us to talk about combining some of our efforts, so that we all have more strength to meet our missions.

And then there are the rumors of Habad. We have all heard that a young couple, Rabbi and Hindi Plotkin, are moving into Greensboro, to establish a bulkhead for Habad programming here. Many of us are delighted that they are coming – we love what they do with kids on college campuses, we love how they reach out to the unaffiliated, we love that they sponsor seders in Katmandu, perhaps some of us love the style of their services. And we welcome the competition they may pose to existing institutions, because competition makes products and people better.

Others of us are more circumspect. We have heard from friends and colleagues, in other small cities and towns, how Habad is no respecter of existing community institutions, how they undercut existing nursery school programs and day camps to create their own, and offer free bar mitzvahs, which often interest families who are less committed to existing institution. We have spent a lot of money and energy in building the institutions which we have, and we are wary,

because some of them are precarious financially, and depend on every single family's tuition. And yet others of us are appalled by Habad's theology – on their messianism, on their insistence that Jews are inherently better than other people, on their non-egalitarianism in public ritual, on their refusal to sing Hatikva as the anthem of the State of Israel, and more.

What ever our view, If they come, they come, and we will welcome them as Jews, because we are Jews, and to be Jewish means to be a mensch. And we will zealously guard the wellbeing of the schools and synagogues and institutions which we have worked so hard to build, and continue to make them better.

Finally, Our Board of Trustees in the middle of the process of articulating a mission statement for Beth David. Oddly enough, we have never had a mission statement before. Some say we don't need one, we know what a shul is for. But it's not so simple. The mission statement really sets for us – members, clergy, board and staff – what our goal is in running and supporting our synagogue. Is it just to provide the needs of our members? That makes us no different than Starmount Country Club. Is it to challenge each of us to grow in Jewish knowledge and observance? That requires change on our part, each of us, and that's a little scary. Is it to help us use the tools of our Jewish tradition to become more fully human? That sounds good, but we really need to think about what it means. I think that it's important for us to articulate the mission of our synagogue, and then, once we know what the goal is, to figure out how to get there.

I recently received from my friend Menachem Creditor, who is a rabbi in the Bay Area, a piece written by the Alban Institute, an outfit that helps churches become better churches. I want to share some of it with you tonight, and I've made copies. It's called Who Owns A Congregation? It's particularly relevant tonight as we gather for our congregational meeting. Who owns the congregation? Is it the congregation itself? That might mean that we are only here to serve ourselves. Is the owner God? That's a little too big for most of us. The author, Dan Hotchkiss, suggests that the owner of the congregation is its mission. The congregation exists to serve its mission, and he suggests that the mission of any congregation is to change lives. Our job is to figure out in what way we want to change lives, and how to get there. Each of us has our own mission within Beth David – we call it volunteering. But if we can frame that volunteering – to answer phones, to set up books for sale, to feed poor people, to help people on the bimah, whatever we do, in a larger frame, then our efforts will be sharper, and will have more meaning.

I want to close tonight by saying thank you.

We have a **staff** here in our building that help our volunteers keep the place running and are devoted to making Beth David a good home for our community: We are all indebted to them and I want to **thank them** by name.

Wendy Rothstein, Phil Silver, Mark Goodfriend, Leslie McGee, Steve Shub, Kathy Clontz, , Donna Norris, Lucy Smith, Joy Thomas , our religious school teachers Helene Avraham-Katz, Rita Baron, Susan Kusnitz, Suzanne Goodfriend, and our USY advisor – Rachel Goodfriend. Thank you.

There are so many **wonderful volunteers** among our congregational membership – serving on committees, and helping out in individual ways – performing ongoing tasks which help our congregational family run smoothly. I cannot name and thank them all, but we are all intensely grateful to them for being part of our community.

Finally, I would like to thank our president, Susan Nehmen. At her mid –term, Susie has been supportive to all of my and our staff's, efforts at Beth David. She has gently prodded, taken some of the heat from complaints, and called, cajoled, defended, initiated, and deflected on my behalf, and championed our synagogue. Her leadership has moved us forward – with Wendy, with eliminating our long-term debt, and with charting a new course for our Board of Trustees. . It has been a pleasure to share the bimah with her on Shabbat mornings, and to share the boardroom with her on Thursday nights, and to meet, by phone, or for lunch, or in my office, to plan out our next moves to make the synagogue a better place and a stronger congregation. I look forward to working with her for another year, and then to our president elect, Mark Samet. Susan – thank you, Yishar Koach, and may you go from strength to strength.

And thank you, all of you, our Beth David family, for your support, and efforts on behalf of Beth David, and for making our community a wonderful place to live and to grow Jewishly.