

Dear fellow Beth El members,

Last year at this time, we held our annual meeting in the fellowship hall of Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church and then joyously danced our Torahs back to the newly renovated Snyderman building to celebrate moving back into our home. If you have a chance to drive by our synagogue in the next week or so, you'll see the gorgeous flowers that have grown in our new front garden this year. It's disappointing that we cannot hold our annual meeting this year in person in our new space, but I am really looking forward to seeing your faces online for our first ever virtual Annual Meeting. Below, I share some updates in preparation for our meeting and some thank-yous as I conclude my term as President.

First and foremost, I am pleased to report that the Board of Trustees has recommended that the Congregation vote to renew Rabbi Greyber's contract through June 2025. Over the last two years, working closely with Rabbi Greyber regularly, I have come to appreciate the incredible commitment and dedication he puts into leading our community. He provides pastoral care and support to an extraordinary number of individuals. He has introduced creative prayers and services to engage more congregants and has an amazing gift for finding the right words for a range of rituals and milestones. During the last several years, Rabbi Greyber has also helped to increase Beth El's involvement locally, teaching classes at the JCC and building deep meaningful relationships with Bishop Godbee and the River Church and Rev Katie Crowe and Trinity Avenue Presbyterian and other local leaders in ways that have enhanced our whole congregation. Most recently, as we have adapted to the COVID-19 crisis, Rabbi's Greyber's steadfast commitment to Judaism and our congregation have been a critical lifeline for many of us-- he has put on a tie and walked up to the sanctuary to lead us in Shabbat services, facilitated online shiva minyans, made dozens of phone calls to members, and so much more. The Rabbi has been an incredible partner to work with over the last two years, and I am truly delighted that he is looking forward to continuing on as our Rabbi for the next phase of our congregational life.

Second, in the materials for the annual meeting, you will find a proposed amendment to our synagogue constitution that has been recommended by our current Financial Secretary, Margie Satinsky. In recent years, our Executive Director has taken on many of the responsibilities that were traditionally held by the Financial Secretary. Today, our Treasurer (currently Syd Miller) sits not only on the Board, but on the Executive Committee and chairs the Finance committee, and the Treasurer and full finance committee oversee the Executive Director's management of our finances. For these reasons, the Board is recommending that we continue to have a Financial Secretary who sits on the Finance Committee, but that we amend the synagogue constitution so it does not require the Financial Secretary to sit on the board or serve as an Officer.

Your packet also includes detailed information on Beth El's finances, our proposed budget for 2020-2021 and the findings and recommendations from our consultant Moss and Ross about Beth El's potential for sustaining financial health. After our very successful capital campaign, we knew that it was important to focus on the long-term financial sustainability of our synagogue's ongoing operations, and asked Moss and Ross to help us translate lessons from the campaign to annual efforts. As you will see in their materials, Moss and Ross' initial interviews with the congregation show enthusiastic support for our community, but that congregants would like to know more about our financial health and our needs. At today's annual meeting and the budget Q&As prior to the meeting, we implemented some changes to improve understanding of our finances. We are also planning to follow their recommendation that we begin our efforts around dues and annual fund much earlier in the year, so that we have a clearer picture of our financial revenue by late Fall instead of in the Spring.

Moss and Ross' expertise has been invaluable, both for planning for the future of Beth El, and during the immediate COVID-19 crisis, when we were already prepared to take quick action to ensure Beth El had the resources it needed during this challenging time. Since March, many of you have fulfilled your commitments to Beth El or even increased your giving, and initial outreach to major donors has led to increased commitments of \$73,000 to our annual fund. Many of you have also committed to the Life and Legacy campaign, and we hope others are considering a similar commitment. This support ensures that everyone who wishes to can participate in our community, and that we can provide the critical spiritual and educational programming and connections that we all value so much. I also want to thank the Finance committee and Development committee members who have invested a great deal of time and thought in supporting efforts to improve our systems and increase transparency around the synagogue's financial health.

Finally, we will vote at the annual meeting on a new slate for the 2020-2021 Board of Trustees and have also included a list of committee chairs for the coming year. As you'll see, we are making one change to combine the Membership and Synagogue Life committees into a new Member Engagement committee that will work closely with our Program and Membership Coordinator, Jenna Hyland. We are also working with our committees and board to think of new ways to coordinate in an effort to streamline and plan together more effectively.

I want to extend deep appreciation to several board members who have finished their terms and are stepping down from the board: Hope Hartman, Noah Pickus, Lois Price, Margie Satinsky, and Herman Sperling. I also want to thank several committee chairs who have led our efforts in recent years for their time and service: Sally Brown (Corresponding Secretary), Donna Goldstein (Lifelong Learning), Hope Hartman (Social Action), Lauri Klein and Susan Springer (Annual Fund), Kim Bardy Langsam (Membership), Mike Resnick (MoB), Randi Smith (ritual), Melissa Segal (community of caring), Tal Wittle (Synagogue Life and Sisterhood). I encourage you to look over the new slate and committee leadership-- we have many new wonderful leaders who have volunteered to step into new roles and their enthusiasm for helping to lead our efforts to sustain a welcoming, inclusive, and engaging community is outstanding. I hope you will consider how you can volunteer with Beth El as well.

At the annual meeting, I will be passing the gavel to Leslie Winner, our President-Elect. Before I do, I want to thank the Rabbi, Alan Friedman, and the executive committee (Noah, Leslie, Dan, Syd) for their partnership over the last two years. We have worked through many great ideas and challenges together as a team, and I have always benefitted from your perspectives and support. You have always been willing to think through any question or take on a task, and I have learned so much from each of you.

I also want to thank all of you. I agreed to serve as vice president and president of Beth El with some trepidation-- not because of the workload, but because I didn't want to make a mistake that would jeopardize the community that I love so much. But the experience of serving as President has been rewarding in so many ways I didn't imagine. I am so proud of what we have done together in the past two years: Our building is beautiful, spacious, inviting, and accessible; we joined the HIAS welcoming campaign; we met with the whole City Council to share our concerns about their approach to Israel and explore ways we could work together on other issues; we broke bread with the River Church and sang with TAPC; we cried together and comforted each other after Pittsburgh and losses in our own community family; we celebrated an extraordinary High Holidays in our reoriented sanctuary and a few Bar Mitzvah's (including my son's!). More than all these accomplishments, my greatest joy has been the opportunity to get to know so many of you-- over coffee, in minyan together, at the Shabbaton, and at

many many meetings. I am so grateful for the opportunity to deepen my friendships and learn from so many of you and I look forward to many more years of fellowship and learning together at Beth El (hopefully in person sometime in the future!).

B'Shalom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie".

Debbie Goldstein