

President's Speech
Rosh Hasahana 5777
David Wang

L'shana tova,

I come before you this new year for my third, and final High Holy Day Speech as President. No, you haven't gotten rid of me yet but I know my term will come to an end this year and new leadership will step up and take the helm.

It has been an honor to serve this congregation throughout this time of transition. For those of you who may be joining us for the first time, we have been going through some important changes throughout the first two years of my term. For all of you, since July and during these High Holy Days, we have been experiencing the truly inspiring addition of our new Rabbis.

The process was long and, at times, the work was hard. From congregational needs surveys to community forums. From the interim search committee to the permanent search committee, to interviews, to offer, acceptance and, finally, to July 1 when Rabbi Karen and Rabbi Micah joined our community.

Throughout this process we tried to maintain transparency and keep this congregation apprised every step along the way. I am truly grateful for the work of all the lay leaders and volunteers who took this holy task so seriously. Our two most recent immediate past Presidents, Dan Weller and Amy Cook were invaluable to me. I am also grateful for the role Rabbi Crystal played in getting us ready for our new Rabbis. Finally, I am grateful for the wise counsel I received from Rabbi Zoob throughout this time of change.

On behalf of the entire congregation, I wish a warm welcome to our new Rabbi/Educators and thank them both for what have already been very meaningful services leading up to and including these days of Awe.

And I invite you all to please join us again on the Shabbat of November 4th and 5th when this multi-year process will culminate with the installation of our new permanent Rabbis. Amy Cook and the transition committee are preparing a weekend not to be missed.

We have also been blessed these past few days and will continue to enjoy the beautiful voice of our High Holy Day soloist, Jenny Lebow, who has joined us from Tulsa. Thank you Jenny for your beautiful music.

You should know that a lot of work went into preparing for these services even before the Rabbis Citrin and Jenny arrived here. Because of their past working and congregational relationship, Rabbis were able to put much of the service together before any of them arrived on scene. We have thus far been able to enjoy the results of this wonderful reunion.

There are many other thank you's that are owed but, rather than repeat them, I call your attention to service supplement you received. If you see any of the people mentioned, please thank them for all that they do for the community. However, special thanks go to

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Lisa Altman for all her work in leading up to the High Holy Days. She has put in countless hours and I, and we, are most grateful.

For the past two years I have come before you and spoken about the importance of Kehilla or community. While we were facing changes in our Rabbinic leadership, and in our school, and with our music...the one constant that remained was our connection to each other in the congregation. I have tried to highlight these bonds in the past but I believe we can do more.

On these High Holy days we come together as one community. The Gates have been opened and we come together to renew our dedication to creating a world in God's image and to treating each other with the respect and the holiness that befits all who were created in God's image- B'tzelim Elohim.

As we continue through our personal transitions and our Temple's transition, I urge you all to think of the connection you have to this community and in the year ahead to try to do more to forge bonds that go beyond the High Holy days.

Whether it is signing up for an Oneg, volunteering on a committee or starting a new group like our "green team" which was formed last year by Fred Davis, I urge you to find more ways to connect to each other in what I believe is a very special community.

And as new and prospective members join us, and they will join us, please do your best to welcome them with audacious hospitality so they too can find a place to lend their voice and their spirit to our Kehilla.

This Spring, on the weekend of April 1-2, we will have a congregational retreat to help further strengthen our connections to Judaism and to each other. Please save the date and try and attend what I believe is our first-ever congregational retreat. If I am wrong about that, I know someone will correct me. I might even have a few ideas about who that will be...But I invite you to join us nonetheless. More details will be coming soon.

I promised the Rabbis I would be brief but before I finish I feel it is my duty once again to remind you of our ongoing financial needs. I have said it before, and I imagine whoever follows me will say it again, but dues alone are not enough to sustain this congregation. We have tried to open our community to let all who wish to join become a part of it. Recently, we have also had to perform some much-needed, but quite expensive maintenance on our building.

In order to do this, we ask those of you who can do more to please look into your hearts, and yes, your wallets, and give generously. Please consider an additional donation during these High Holy Days to help sustain our community. And, if you write "Kehilla" or "High Holy Day Appeal" on your check, I will know that at least some of you stayed awake during my speech. Just remember to write 5777 and not 5776 on your check...(an old joke, I know).

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Now for the words the Rabbis and many of you have been waiting for....

In conclusion, this has been and continues to be a very generous and welcoming congregation. I am honored to be your President and I appreciate the support you have shown me and my family. On behalf of Debbie, myself and our sons Ben & Sam, I wish you all a sweet and healthy New Year.