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President, Board of Trustees
Erev Rosh Hashanah Message 5772

Shanah Tovah and welcome to our High Holy Days at Peninsula Temple Beth El.

What a difference a year makes! Last year I stood before you as your new president, with a new slate of officers and many new board members. I told you that PTBE was moving forward while honoring the traditions of the past. That instead of saying "Thanks for being a member, now what can you do for us?" our modern temple says "Thanks for being a member, what can we do to meet your needs?"

From that simple premise, our entire Beth El experience is flourishing. With hundreds of you being so kind to connect to us, to find meaningful ways to join temple life, to have helped me and our other leaders, we are experiencing vibrancy, growth and a renaissance that is the envy of so many other communities here and throughout the country. I thank each and every one of you who has participated and lent a hand in this amazing time.

In a time when, around the Bay Area, temple memberships are down, participation is down, and other temples are in the *red* we are blessed, aware and thankful for what is happening at PTBE. We could not do it without each of us connecting to our community of over 780 families.

So what does 780 member families look like? Who are we and what are we doing?

We are a Board of Trustees that spans the generations, from our youngest member with a newborn, to parents with young and older children, to empty nesters and grandparents. But there is a connection between us all at whatever age and stage. We're Jews, and we ALL are trying to help create the life we want to live. And you have chosen to make PTBE a big part of your lives.

In addition to our valued long-term members, we have many new members at PTBE and we have welcomed them all with a work in progress of how we integrate folks within that first year of membership. From welcome baskets, to board member phone calls, a welcome reception, treated to a first year of BEW or Brotherhood membership, we are on it. It is not about the *stuff*, but about how our arms are open to embrace one and all.

We have 380 children enrolled in our many varied educational programs from ages 5-18 and we're hopping! We have 140 teens in our teen education programs. We are bursting at the seams. We will celebrate b'nai mitzvahs on

40 out of the next year's 52 weeks. Weddings and baby namings occur here at temple because this is, truly, a Jewish home for *simchas* and more solemn occasions alike. As our community ages, it is 60 years old, many families are being served by our Caring Committee, and our clergy in memorial services, funerals and *shivah minyans* with the passing of loved ones.

People come to Beth El and find wonderfully rich cultural, religious, educational and social programs to choose from. On any given weekday or weeknight evening, you can find 4 different groups meeting with a full spectrum of activities. We're out of space, but keeping calm, and carrying on! I'd be wealthy if I had a nickel for every meeting or temple activity now held in members' homes and other off site locations!

Hundreds of our members spend their time here with social action activities. To say that social action is in PTBE's DNA from the first moments of our birth here in San Mateo is right-on

Today, our religious school and a large cadre of dedicated adults are making hundreds of lunches each month for Samaritan House clients. We thank each of you for bringing the fixings for those lunches during our HHD food drive. Many members assist with sheltering, and helping our guests from Home and Hope's Shelter network. Our PTBE home becomes theirs. Our active Civic Interreligious Outreach Committee works to bridge the gap between us and our neighbors of different faiths. And within PTBE our Caring Committee cares for us at our most happy and sad times of life.

Well over 100 adults are involved in governance and committee work moving us forward and keeping our community viable and safe. While many others are involved in our BEW and Brotherhood auxiliaries, others serve on our Education Committee supporting our children's Jewish education.

And there is room for you. We know that you will find something that you enjoy doing, come and see for yourself that your presence and company are desired. We can never have enough friends . . . ever.

Let's return to the top of this address, a year ago we promised you that we would meet with as many of you as wanted to meet in parlor meetings. We needed to continue to understand and refine our members' program, facilities, and physical site needs.

The 8 packed Parlor Meetings that we held allowed over 250 members to synthesize what we'd learned in our 2010 Membership Survey. We

repeatedly heard that we are out of space, *Period Full Stop!* We need places where we can gather informally and comfortably, a living room where we can meet our friends and schmooze. Our Social Hall needs to be a multi-purpose Room. It needs to be physically attractive. Our kitchen needs to be one where we can socialize and teach Jewish holiday cooking. We need appropriate classrooms for adults, teens and school age children. The list from the Parlor Meetings also included a second prayer space, meeting rooms and play spaces for our children that are age appropriate. I recently met with our third graders – and they even got it right! They told me that they need a basketball court, their own desks that are not in *baby rooms*, and a playground like at their *real* schools. Out of the mouths of babes . . .

All of the Parlor Meetings' raw data was sent to our temple architects who designed and oversaw the re- building of this Sanctuary 10 years ago. They know us, understand our aesthetic and our unique community values.

Our architects have turned our stated desires into preliminary concepts and we are moving forward. First we need to understand the cost of such a project and understand our capacity as a community. Our Steering, Design and Campaign Committees are hard at work managing this exciting undertaking – we know that our responsibility is to serve our present members, our children's future and our grandchildren's future at PTBE.

We are unique, we have always deeply cared for one another, we are family, we always strive to do the best for our community. This is who we are. I was raised here, I've seen it from my eyes in every stage of my life. It is literally one for all, but all for one as well. In today's world, this is a priceless gift. This is the success of PTBE.

60 years ago a group similar to ourselves saw the vision of a PTBE of the future, and we now have the opportunity to move forward with our vision for a future dreamed about. Imagine the next generation 60 years from now looking back at what we accomplished.

This is about us feeling that we deserve and want a better life for ourselves here and now. It is about generosity, devotion, and ability to fund such a project for those living today and those not yet here.

I know we can do this, we will insure and enhance our future, we have proven that through 60 years, 6 full decades of life at PTBE, in good times and bad.

Thank you Rabbi Eisner for your strong unwavering vision of who we are, and of challenging us always to do our best for ourselves and others in all ways of life. You are forever present. Thank you Rabbi Karen Citrin for your years of devotion to enhancing and visioning new wonderful ways of childhood and family education, in being a wonderful rabbinic presence for us. Thank you Rabbi Micah Citrin for your dedication to educating our teens with your own innovation and rabbinic presence. Thank you to Elana Jagoda, our gifted cantorial soloist for giving your spiritual, religious and untold musical gifts to us as we worship; you lift us up. A huge thanks to our untiring and devoted COO Blair Brown for being a one man band who never stops looking at how he can improve our lives at PTBE.

And huge thanks go to all our devoted caring administrative staff members who daily keep us all going, without all of these individuals we could not exist!

And finally, to each of you, my friends, my PTBE family, my husband Steve, thank you for allowing me this great honor and privilege to serve this community as your temple president. It is a life experience that I will cherish forever. I humbly say from this bimah one last time, shanah tovah. Bless you all.