

## President's Message Summer 2013

I have been writing this message in my head for the last year and I am still not ready to write it.

When I joined this congregation 19 years ago, there was a new rabbi at the synagogue, Rabbi Ellen Lewis. I had never been part of a congregation with a female rabbi before, but was delighted with her enthusiasm and her love for Judaism. Over the past 19 years, Rabbi Lewis and I have almost been joined at the hip, with my position in the temple being either treasurer or President for 11 of those years.

All three of my children attended Sunday school only at this temple with Rabbi Lewis guiding them through the process and assisting them in writing their *D'var torah*. She worked with us to have a most memorable service with Allison and Caitlin so that they could equally lead the service. She assisted Iris in her spiritual journey to convert to Judaism, which has now led Iris to chair the Ritual Committee in the coming years. She assisted Charlotte and me in the teaching of the latest group of adult B'Nai Mitzvah class and in assuring them that they would be prepared and ready to lead the service.

Rabbi has been my spiritual advisor for the major part of my adult life and is a part of who I am and what I stand for. The Rabbi assisted me in my largest project in the temple, which was the converting the temple to allow handicapped access to all places except the bimah, and we have always had a plan that when a person could not come up to the Bimah, we bring the Bimah down to the people. The saying that you shall not put a stumbling block before the blind was not enough for us; we needed to remove the block entirely, so that the building was available to all people.

There are so many memories of temple activities that I hold dear. Without meaning to omit anyone else's special moments, some of my favorite moments have been the enormous smile that Sarah Weinstein brings to our congregation when she is up on the bimah, and especially at her Bat Mitzvah, which may have been the most special moment outside of my family times. Anyone who attended the Bar Mitzvah of my good friend Maxwell Gross could not have left the sanctuary without knowing what a special event they had just witnessed. Having Charlotte Fels read the story of Jonah each year was a treat each and every time. And having the Rabbi ask me to call the Shofar blowing for Eric was truly special.

I will be stepping down as president of the Jewish Center after my term completes in June. But I am not going anywhere. I will still be actively involved in temple life and will do whatever I can to assist the temple in the future.

I personally want to thank Rabbi Lewis for enabling this congregation to end up after 19 years of her leadership in about the same place as she received it: a small, loving and warm place to worship and meet. Rabbi, with all of the changes over the past 19 years, the congregation is essentially the same as it was when you got here, only much wiser from your teachings. We have looked at ourselves and decided that we like who we are and

where we are both physically and spiritually. That is not an easy task to accomplish over the past 19 years, as the world has undergone tremendous amounts of change, and we have remained true to our core, thanks to you.

I wish you all the best in your life and hope that we have sustained you over these years as you have sustained us.

Love, Howie