

Shanah Tovah,

I want to start by publicly forgiving anyone who has wronged me during the past year. I also ask forgiveness from anyone I may have hurt, however inadvertently it may have been. I next want to say thank you to my board of trustees, who make sure that the good of this temple supersedes any personal goals they have. They work tirelessly for the good of all of you.

I do want to send out a couple of shout outs to members of the board who go above and beyond what is called for from their positions. First is Jeff Berkowitz, who takes care of this building like he lives here, and considering he is third generation of this temple, it is apparent how much love he has for this building. Second is Suzi Marr, who has turned the Sisterhood into the most exciting part of the adult activities in this congregation. Third is my wife Iris, who worries about every detail in running the High Holiday services and must adjust constantly about who is doing what, as people have issues, become ill, have accidents or contract covid. The amount of work that she puts in to make these services run as smooth as possible is incredible.

My overriding goal in being the eternal president of this congregation is to be able to leave this congregation to the next generation of Warren County Jews. One of the things that I see is that the folks who show up for the High Holidays and do not become members, assume that we will be here year after year. This is reasonable, as for my whole existence in Warren County, this temple has been here. But there are no guarantees that this will continue. We need you to step up to the plate and become full members of the community, who pay dues and dedicate some of your time to make this place a vibrant Jewish community. The one thing I can tell you from my experience is that you will get way more than you will give by donating your time and talents to this community. Up to now, we have been doing a pretty good job of having a vibrant Jewish community with such a small membership base. Part of this, we can thank those who came before us, and left us a good deal of cash that we use to do many of the things we do. Most congregations of our size do not have a Rabbi, let alone a cantor for the year. The fact that we can do this year after year shows a commitment from all of you.

BUT, and here's the but. This congregation is aging. Our Sunday School only has a few students. Younger families are not flocking to us, if they even exist in our area. If this congregation is to survive into the future, we need to figure out how to engage the younger Jewish families in the area. We have been told that many churches and temples currently are not doing as well as they have in the past, due to lack of younger families not engaging in religion these days. That is not an excuse for us not to try hard to be more inviting to younger families.

We need all your help in trying to build up our Sunday School and having younger families join us, as we all feel we have so much to offer to the young families. Rabbi and Shira Dubin, Debbie Apsel and Student Cantor Shayna are marvelous in the roles as Sunday School leaders, and we just need to build up the number of students in the Sunday School. We also need more help with certain tasks that need to be done around the temple. I was not pleased with the response we received this year regarding assisting with the community garden. It would have been nice to share this work with more than the four people who planted and weeded and harvested and delivered the food to the food pantries this year. As it turned out, we were able to grow over 100 pounds of produce, including tomatoes, eggplants, green and banana peppers, zucchini, as well as rosemary, sage, and basil.

As I begin my 18th and last year as the leader of this congregation, I ask you to step up and help us run this place. If you haven't been on the board before, please talk to us and volunteer to help run this organization. If we don't get new blood and new leadership, I am concerned for the future of our

wonderful community. I have been here 28 years and would like to continue to watch my granddaughters become Bat Mitzvah in the place that I have called my second home.

Love, Howie