

Kol Nidre 5779

First of all, I hope you're glad to have services here at Beth Shalom. Before I say anything else, I need to thank more people than I can possibly name, but I'll start with Bernie Fried and our hard-working staff for everything they have done to make it possible to have services here this Yom Tov. Next, a hearty Today Rabah to Amy Schultz, Brian Bell, Chuck Gasser Leslie Mark, Jason Krakow, Victor Wishna, Marla Brockman, and a large group of volunteers who pitched in to make everything run as smoothly as it has. Next, thank you to those members who led services, and read Torah, particularly Rita Cortes. These are members who grace our services not just on the holidays, but throughout the year. We're most grateful to all of you. Thank you to Rabbi Glickman and Hazzan Ben Yehuda for their inspiring leadership of many diverse service offerings. And Yasher Koach to David Helfand, who grew up at Beth Shalom, for his thoughtful leadership of services both this past summer on occasion, as well as over the holidays. We're very lucky to have them all. After Yom Tov, we would like to hear comments about your high holiday experience. Please respond to the email you will be sent asking for comments. If email's not your thing, please feel free to send a letter to the office. If you tell me in the hallway, I may not remember, but I want to have your thoughts.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Glickman asked each of us to ask ourselves “What is Our Why”: why do we participate in the life of this synagogue and the larger Jewish community. For me, personally, and perhaps for others of you, the “why” is tied up in memories of my and my family’s Jewish past. Diane and I grew up in other shuls, but more than twenty years ago we decided to join Beth Shalom because Conservative Judaism is both traditional and egalitarian. We remain here because it feels like home, and because we hope to grow older in a vibrant, friendly Jewish community. That’s important to us in part because our children and grandchildren live elsewhere. Each of you has your own reasons for being part of this community. I hope that, while we’re observing Yom Kippur between now and tomorrow evening, you can take a few minutes to think about the Rabbi’s request, and to consider why Beth Shalom, and Conservative Judaism, are important to you and your family.

If institutions such as Congregation Beth Shalom are to thrive, we need to evolve, creating a future that is new and fresh, but still true to our mission. We are a Conservative synagogue, one which embraces change within the bounds of its traditions. Beth Shalom is changing, in some ways that are obvious and hopefully exciting to you, and others that are less obvious. I’d like to spend just a few minutes talking about what we’re continuing to do day in and day out, and also about some changes to look forward to in the months and years to come.

Here's what we do. We hold services twice a day, week in and week out. If you've ever had to mourn the loss of a family member, or observe a yahrtzeit, our daily minyan that is held at Village Shalom during weekday mornings and evenings is a huge source of comfort. In addition to being a place of comfort, our shul also creates events which are exciting, which are based on the Jewish calendar, and which provide an opportunity to strengthen our relationships with each other. Our Purim program, which opened with the Marching Cobras, recently received an award from the Jewish Federation, and our Simchat Torah program, which will be on Monday evening, October 1, also draws a large crowd from all age groups. I hope each of you can be there. Our Breaking Bread fundraiser was a huge success last year, and we will have another edition of it on March 31st – featuring local celebrity chef Michael Smith.

The Rose Preschool continues to be a source of pride for all of us, teaching our children Jewish holidays, customs, blessings and values. And, the Polsky Religious School continues to imbue our students with Jewish values. The religious school of course teaches our students what they need to know for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. But more importantly, our school teaches them how to live an active Jewish life after B'nai Mitzvah, in college and beyond. The proof of that is in what our students do after they leave home. Several have gone on to be Hillel leaders in college, and many if not most of them are active participants in Jewish life. They become doctors and lawyers and business leaders to be

sure, but at the same time they host Shabbat dinners in the cities where they live, become leaders in their Federation and other Jewish causes, and have the tools they need to pass on their *Yiddishkeit* to their children and others.

The things we do cost money. We value your generous contributions. I can assure you that the officers and Board of Directors take seriously their role in being stewards of your gifts. We've made important changes in recent months to bring our budget into balance. By November, we will have reduced our office staff by 20% and, as I'm sure you've noticed, we're asking for more support from our members. But we need to have a balanced budget because we want to be able to do even more for our members.

Which brings me to what's new for this year. If you've been through the handouts, you might have seen that we're having four new Friday evening dinner programs that we're calling Shabbat Around the World. Learn about both the food and the culture of different Jewish communities, from Israeli to Moroccan to the shtetl and beyond, and enjoy a delicious dinner to boot. We're also adding four Shabbat morning musical services as an alternative to our regular services those days. On March 10, the Hazzan is planning a concert to teach the history of Israel through song. In a more somber vein, we also have scheduled programs on opioid use and other medical issues in our community, as well as a Holocaust program featuring our own member (who is not related to me), and

much more. As mentioned on Rosh HaShanah, you can look forward to another year of Pop Up Rabbi KC, where you can share a cup of coffee with Rabbi Glickman at one of many coffee shops throughout the Kansas City area. Also, he will be teaching the popular Talmud Jam classes that take place over lunch at Lathrop & Gage near downtown and Black & Veatch near the Jewish Community Campus.

I mentioned the importance of volunteers to our work. Year in and year out, our Lechem committee provides meals to the needy in the name of our congregation. Our Hesed committee provides comfort to those in difficult circumstances. Volunteers help out in our office, and that's even more important with our leaner staff. And on and on...Among all the programs we have, and the variety of service offerings, I hope that each of you can find at least part of the answer to why you are here. I would also ask you to think about the friendships that you have developed and deepened because of this synagogue, the people you see regularly who you first got to know here, and the projects you have worked on, and experiences you have had at Beth Shalom that strengthened those friendships.

And while you're thinking about the Jewish experiences that have helped shape your life, please consider where those took place. As I said, I did not grow up at Beth Shalom, but I well recall the awe I would sometimes feel from being in a

sanctuary on Yom Kippur, or even a regular Shabbat morning, not to mention getting married in that place. Our tradition teaches us that that feeling of a strong connection isn't just for children. Indeed, the Torah instructed our ancestors to build a mishkan, a sanctuary to carry with them as they wandered in the desert.

The Torah says: *Asu li mikdash, v'shachanti b'tocham*. "Make me a holy place," God says, "that I may dwell among them." Them is now us, all of us. Building a sanctuary is deeply rooted in our people's tradition. This commandment from the Torah is one that Beth Shalom has taken very seriously throughout its history, from the magnificent Moorish synagogue on 34th Street to the modern tent-like sanctuary on 95th Street. When the synagogue decided to move the school from 95th, that plan included following with a sanctuary here. Economic reversals in 2001 and 2008 deferred those plans. In response, we adapted well, as seen in this room and the one downstairs. But neither is a sanctuary, and we now, finally, have the opportunity to fulfill our commitment to the congregation and to the Torah. Here are a few practical, tangible items to consider:

First, through the generosity of the late Hannah Mae Krumholz, we have in the bank \$1.5 million, the explicit condition of the gift being that those funds can only be spent for an addition of sacred space to this building, at 143rd and Lamar. If we don't build an addition, we are obligated to return those funds to Mrs.

Krumholz's other heirs. We also have a 50% match of every dollar we raise, with

a maximum match of \$5 million. Between money on hand from Mrs. Krumholz and that match, we already have commitments for pretty close to half the money needed for this campaign – 43.3% to be precise. And we intend to be precise as we move forward. That’s a tremendous head start, and it’s up to us to get us the rest of the way there.

Next, there will be no assessment. I promise you that. In fact, the matching gift I just mentioned is contingent on there being no assessment. We will not move forward until we have all the pledges needed to complete the project. So, we need this campaign to move forward swiftly.

Third, while we should be proud of how we have adapted to our circumstances, those of you who may think, “This is good enough,” might think again. Many of our congregants expect more from their synagogue when it comes to facilities than we currently have. Our ability to attract new members has been and will continue to be hampered, until we have amenities that, to be blunt, are competitive with what other shuls in the community have or are planning.

Those are a few concrete reasons to go ahead with this project. But the most important reason to build a mikdash, a holy place, is to give us and our families a facility that shows respect to God, to our congregation and to the rich Beth Shalom tradition we have come to inherit. Those benefits are largely intangible,

I'll acknowledge. But then, I would suggest, Judaism is all about intangibles, the feeling of connection with each other and maybe even with God; the importance of sacred objects and sacred spaces in helping us to make those connections.

When I was writing these remarks Diane reminded me that when it came to building the mishkan the Torah says that the artisans working on it came to Moses and said that "The people are bringing more than is needed for the tasks entailed in the work that the Lord has commanded to be done"(Shemot 35:35). The last promise I'll make to you this evening is to let you know when we get to that point. In the meantime, if you haven't already done so, take a look at the model and pictures in the hallway, and imagine how much deeper our experience together could be in a space that truly feels sacred. We need your help to max out the matching gift we have in hand, and to help make this dream a reality.

This evening, I have discussed our talented and energetic staff, our many volunteers, the new services and programs we are offering, and the new sacred space we are hoping to build. I've asked you to think about why Conservative Judaism, and this shul, are important to you. I've asked you to consider supporting our hope to build space in this building that truly feels God-like. I'll end with one last request, and it's not for money. Between now and Chanukah I would ask you to try something in the shul that you haven't tried recently, be it Friday evening services, daily minyan, kiddish corps on Shabbat mornings,

learning with the Rabbi, any of the programs I've discussed, or any other events or activities. I'm confident that if you try something new this year, you will be glad you did. I hope that each of you and those you love will be sealed for a year of happiness and fulfillment. Good Yom Tov.