

Yom Kippur Morning 5775

Making it Happen: A Vision for Temple Beth Tikvah

*Atem nitzavim hayom, kulchem:*

You stand this day, all of you:

*Rasheychem. Shivteychem.*

The heads of your tribes:

Matriarchs and patriarchs,

Grandparents among us,

Especially grandparents among us with children and grandchildren here, in Bend.

*Zikneychem v'shotreychem.*

Your elders and officers, everyone in Israel:

Founding members, current board members, committee chairs, donors, volunteers, and regulars. Men, women, teens, tweens, and children.

*V'gercha asher b'kerev machanechah.*

And the stranger in your camp – whether he chops your wood or she draws your water:

Not just every Jew, here today, but also the husband and wife, the daughter in law and the father in law, the son in law and mother in law, the neighbor, the friend...

*Atem nitzavim hayom, kulchem:*

You stand this day, all of you, all of us...

And not only those among us who are here, physically present.

But also, the Torah says,

*V'et asher eyneynu po imanu hayom:*

Even those who are not here, among us, right now,

They, too, have a stake in this moment.

In the narrative of the Torah, the ancient Israelites and the strangers among them stood on the eastern banks of the River Jordan. They stood ready to enter into the Promised Land.

We stand, or sit, today...Yom Kippur. The crescendo of Kol Nidrey is past. Now it is our season finale, our final moment of reckoning. A long day of prayer and reflection, abstention and discomfort.

As the sun moves across the sky, our slate is ritually cleansed.

The score is nil – nil.

What's our game plan?

5775 is Temple Beth Tikvah's seventh year.

A sabbatical year.

A time to slow down, take a good look, sharpen our tools, rest our work horses, and plan...

Plan for the next seven years.

Last spring, forty members of our congregation, founders and newbies like me, dedicated an entire day to gathering the lessons we've learned during the first six years of Temple Beth Tikvah's history. We documented that conversation in a paper called "Manifesting Communal Wisdom." Anyone interested in seeing that document can email or call me or Mark Schindel and we can send it to you. Manifesting Communal Wisdom maps out the goals and aspirations our leaders and most active volunteers have for our congregation.

In a few short weeks, Saturday, October 18, we will meet again. If you missed the invitation, it's not too late to sign up. Our goal is to take our conversation to the next level.

As we discussed last night, talk can be cheap. We have so many dreams and visions, aspirations and goals. And we have only so many resources and only so much time.

This year, we enter into our sabbatical year.

A time for us, as a congregation to slow down, take a good look, sharpen our tools, rest our work horses, and plan...Plan for the next seven years.

We've collected wisdom and advice, we've dreamed big, now we will prioritize and refine. We will make some choices and get to work.

Whether you attend this workshop or not, whether you are here today to hear this sermon or not...

Just like in the Torah portion,

*V'et asher eyneynu po imanu hayom,*

Even those who are not here, among us, right now, have a stake in our work.

You've entrusted me to dream on behalf of our congregation, setting a tone and pace for our development as a community organization.

*Atem nitzavim hayom*, we are all here. It's as good a time as any to talk about a vision for Temple Beth Tikvah.

As I have begun to acclimate to Jewish life in Bend, I see three distinct arenas for activity and involvement in Temple Beth Tikvah.

First and foremost, we value ourselves as a welcoming community. We really try to be friendly and inviting. There are people among us who are really good rallying support when needed, so at least in times of crisis, most of the time, we step up to the plate and really help out.

I think we can be good neighbors when we're not in crisis, too. Our organization should facilitate connections among our members. We should make it easier for people to meet one another around shared interests or needs, zip codes, or having kids the same age.

We should get to know each other better over time, not just see each other again and again. How can we share information and create opportunities for real engagement that might lead to our people making deeper, more meaningful connections?

This year, I am asking our membership committee to think of itself as a social networking body. Evite, Punchbowl, and mealtrain.com are tools. We need a strategy.

I believe that *we* are our most precious asset. We need to invest more time and energy into making it easier to move past polite small talk, and really get to know one another. A committee can secure venues and get people to show up, we will all have to choose to participate and share pieces of ourselves.

In addition to enjoying one another's company, we value Jewish culture and ritual, Jewish learning and discourse, and *Tikkun Olam*, being part of the solution to problems in our community and the world.

Generating content is the second arena for activity and involvement in Temple Beth Tikvah.

Currently I collaborate with:

A religious committee comprised of two gifted and lovely, but still just two, people;

A music committee comprised of one gifted and lovely woman and her well-chosen entourage of professional musicians;

An education committee comprised of yet one more gifted and lovely woman who gives, and gives;

Our social action committee runs smoothly around facilitating our support to Back Door Café and Bethlehem Inn, and it yearns to do more;

While our survival as an organization depends on our capacity to develop and sustain relationships among our members, the quality of the content we generate nurtures our authenticity and dignity.

During this, our sabbatical year, I am asking our religious and music committees to imagine their work in terms of ritual artistry rather than securing venues and providing set lists.

We have developed monthly themes to explore with our liturgy and music, articles in our newsletter, and adult learning opportunities.

Our congregation is filled with many talented people. We need you. We need you to plan themed parties. We need you to share your musical talents – voices, guitars, drums...even washboards and saws. We need you to share your expertise – people who know good hikes in the area, talks and workshops on all sorts of topics – health and wellness, cooking, woodworking, photography, writing, yodeling – I am certain the gifts of this assembly are infinite in number.

I think we will need to reorganize our working committees in this arena. I suggest:

A ritual committee that facilitates ceremonies for Shabbat, holidays, and life cycle events,

An adult learning committee that coordinates a calendar of talks and workshops,

And parents in our congregation need to help build a parent organization to support the Jewish Community School of Central Oregon, our local Sunday School and Hebrew School.

The third and final arena for activity and involvement in Temple Beth Tikvah is operations and strategic planning. It's fun to dream... but as we spoke last night, talk can be cheap.

We have a highly competent team of volunteers who manage our resources wisely. They document their work so as to account for every penny you generously give, as they should. They keep us honest and they pay the bills we accrue.

We are approximately seventy-five households. As rabbi, I am currently contracted somewhere between one third and one half time. We have no mortgage, which is nice, but no home which is sometimes taxing. The Jewish Community School is doing well, bursting at the seams in its current space at Shalom Bayit. We may very well need more space next year. A good problem to have.

There is a lot of potential. There are also a lot of choices to make. Strategic planning is an essential component of growing any organization wisely. I am asking our leadership to face today's challenges and start leaning deliberately in a direction that we choose for our future.

What are our goals?

More members? Why?

A building? What sort? Classrooms? Sanctuary? Social hall? Clubhouse? Retreat and conference center?

More professional leadership hours? Who? More of me? A cantor? A song leader? A school principal? An executive director or administrator? A bookkeeper?

Who makes these decisions?

What are the criteria for prioritizing what comes first?

It is Yom Kippur, the year, 5775, we emerge from today like fresh clay; Let's take up sculpting...

Ken y'hi ratzon...