

## **President Jeanne Freeman's Kol Nidre speech 5777**

When Rabbi Hershenson was diagnosed with breast cancer, there were concerns for her health, concerns for the synagogue, concerns for the High Holy Day services.

And yet, look at where we are.

We have joined our Rabbi in her fight against cancer – with food, with Reiki, with companionship during chemo, with words of encouragement, and with love. This community, our Rabbi's community, has her back and she knows it. We are her large extended family and we have come together to support her. Demonstrating the power of our love and connection.

On Rosh Hashanah, we listened to Rabbi Hershenson's voice ring strong and clear as she shared a parable that conveyed the importance of doing what you love. When we follow our hearts, pursuing what holds meaning for each of us, we do good for ourselves and others. Her words resonate, framed so poignantly within the context of her circumstance and this Yom Kippur.

This Yom Kippur we are led in worship by our Rabbi's friend and colleague, Rabbi Mike Comins. He is doing a wonderful job as our pinch hitter.

During these High Holy Days, we are blessed to sit in this beautiful sanctuary with friends and family to worship and pray, sing, and speak the sacred words in our prayer books steeped in tradition and ritual.

To ensure that our collective experience is meaningful and worthy of us all, many members of our temple have generously committed their time and energy. These services are proof of the amazing things we can do when we come together. This is the power of connection, of sacred community.

Some of you take on the big jobs – like Kathy and Mark, Lester and Terry, Vivian and Jan, Beverly and Liz. Will all of you please stand – and remain standing. Many take on the small but no less important jobs. By sharing the load, you have lessened our individual burdens and ensured a most beautiful experience. If you helped for the holidays – with publicity, baking, cooking, making phone calls, greeting and checking in people, handing out books, driving to Eugene for bagels and lox, whatever else – please also stand and remain standing. And if you have participated in our services – leading a prayer, opening the ark, reading Torah, playing an instrument, singing – please stand.

Look around. You are the community. You are the synagogue. Your talents and time and energy and skills and willingness to participate have shaped what we are experiencing now. We thank you and applaud you.

This is a theme at Temple Beth Tikvah... we all benefit from the vision and vigor of our fellow congregants who make things happen.

Five years ago Kathy Schindel was concerned that our TBT religious education program was floundering. She took up the banner, did the work, met with Shalom Bayit and we now have the CO Jewish Community school. (That sounded really easy, but it was a lot of work!)

Evie Lerner wanted a community that studies Torah weekly, and invited members into her home each Monday at noon for Torah study. Now more than a dozen people participate on a regular basis, discussing how to bring the lessons of Torah into daily life.

Jerry Greenbach has been extolling the virtues of a CO Jewish youth group for the last few years, and with the help of a dedicated group of people we held our introductory weekend in September and plans are in the works for future programs.

Lauren Olander has built music into our services to provide a richer more joyful worship experience. I remember when it was Lauren playing the flute alone. Our community helped to make her dream come true with contributions to the music fund...and listen to what we have received in return.

These four shared their dreams, the community helped them come alive and we have all benefited.

Prior to joining Temple Beth Tikvah, it had been many years since I had been a member of a synagogue, but there were many family occasions that brought me in. Each synagogue I entered had an individual feel. There was a history of the people that worshipped there; of what was important to them, and what they did. It was written on the walls of their building and it guided their growth.

Think about this. We are fortunate to not have our own building. We are fortunate that we have no history on the walls to define us. We are fortunate to be still evolving and growing. We are able to be anything that **you** want. We get to do things the same way, or a different way, each time. There are notes and binders that we pass along, but nothing is set in the stones of a synagogue. We are, each of us and all together, the synagogue. We are, each of us and all together, the sacred community.

I know what I want. I want us to be even **more**. I want more of you to get to know each other, and for us to become an even stronger, tighter community. I want us to swell, not in number, but with the pride of connecting through TBT.

We have prepared so many ways for you to connect with each other this coming year. Our committees have plans to help you thrive spiritually, intellectually, socially.

You can come to musical erev Shabbats, informal Kabbalat Shabbats, Family Shabbats, Shabbat@Home dinners, and holiday celebrations. Join us for monthly adult ed teachings from Rabbi Hershenson, Havdallahs with a movie and Havdallahs with a

maven. Help us feed the neediest people in Central Oregon at Back Door Café, Family Kitchen and Bethlehem Inn. Send your teens and pre-teens to our BBYO programs.

But as much as we plan within our congregation, there are so many different demographic groups with diverse interests – empty nesters, seniors, young families, singles, families with teens and tweens, families with children and those without. The board and committees alone can't possibly figure out what each group wants and needs to feel connected.

So, I'm asking for your help, so **we** can do **our** best to serve **you** well. We need you to tell us: What role do you want this synagogue to play in your life? What can we do better? And more of? Or less of? And how can **you** participate to make it happen?

Send me an email. Come to a board meeting – the first Tuesday of each month. Talk to the board members and committee chairs. We are all listed on the website, in the newsletter, and in your member roster. Call or email.

Please put your wants and needs on our radar screen and contribute to the evolution. That's what will make Temple Beth Tikvah... your synagogue.

We want you to become part of the fiber of our beautiful congregation. Because there are lifelong friendships to be made here. There are opportunities to learn and to have fun. To support each other. To share. To make each other better, smarter, kinder. And ultimately to become an integral part of something grander ... a community called Temple Beth Tikvah.

May it be an easy fast.