



Congregation Beth Torah

President's Column

February 2010

New Year's Resolutions

Last month I wrote about the diversity of educational opportunities available here at Beth Torah. I hope that the timing inspired you to reach for something new and challenging.

Along those lines, per our Constitution, which is available on the Beth Torah website (http://www.congregationbethtorah.org/congregation/pdf/CBT_Constitution.pdf), at the January meeting the Board approved Phil Gerstenfeld as our Nominating Committee chair. His role is to identify and present a list of candidates for the officers and directors who would serve on the Executive committee from July 2010 to June of 2011. Those approved at the April Board meeting will then be voted upon by the Congregation at the next annual meeting. While there is also a mechanism for other candidates to be nominated at the annual meeting, this process is structured to allow for smooth transitions and cross-training.

What does all of this mean to you? It is an opportunity for you to make suggestions to Phil as to who you think should be in positions of leadership at Beth Torah. He collects input from the congregation, as well as from past and present leaders, and uses it to form next years Executive Committee. Most of those suggested may not be able to accept a position on the Executive Committee, but your suggestion(s) could be used by the President to ask them to participate on the Board of Directors instead.

From my perspective, ideally you would say to Phil, or myself, "I want to get involved and to help the Board." Our board of directors cares deeply and passionately about Beth Torah. Most members chair various committees and most need the help only new volunteers can provide. The unique culture we have at Beth Torah comes from the fact that so much work is done by volunteers. Less altruistically is the fact that, with so much being done by volunteers, some of our direct costs can be better controlled while offering more programming and trying to avoid increases in membership dues. As you may recall from the High Holidays, dues only cover about 60% of our costs. The remaining 40% comes from other fundraisers such as Shield of David, Jews of the American Song Book, The Kopita Torah Dedication, and our upcoming 'Big Night Out' on March 6.

Those of you who were members around 1995 may recall the discussions about raising the profile on donor recognition to facilitate the building of an Education Wing and, later, to refurbish the Sanctuary since Beth Torah's modest personality and culture had long refrained from prominent placing of donor plaques and high profile sponsorships. Despite some very generous gifts we currently carry about 1.6 million dollars in mortgage debt



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across two different notes. Fortunately, our 'Burn the Mortgage' campaign now has us about 3 years away from paying off the smaller note (roughly \$400, 000).

Once this note is paid off, we will be in a slightly less hand-to-mouth existence and have a few more choices on how to move forward. Every dollar paid on these notes actually has the longer term benefit of reducing the interest we pay over time. Right now that results in a better rate of return than putting the money into a bank account. This is why we ask for your time and your donations.

B'yedidut

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony".