



Temple Micah Annual Meeting

President's Report: Rielle Miller Gabriel

June 6, 2023

Welcome. Thank you for joining us for our Annual Meeting. We will hear a few presentations and have some important votes later this evening. But first, let me tell you the story of Temple Micah from this year.

As we stand on the cusp of our 60th anniversary, Temple Micah is a congregation that has not only weathered the past few years, but has thrived. By all measures of success – our people, our finances, and our building – we are in a good place. And while we have areas we must continue to work on, we are, fortunately, a community that tackles the tough conversations before us.

At a time when many congregations are struggling to attract new members, we have added 55 new member households to keep us at around 670 member units. Our new members mostly live in DC; about a fifth of them identify as seniors and about 2/3 of them have a child enrolled in our Machon Micah (our religious education program) – which we will hear much more about from our Education Director.

Over the course of this year our congregation has returned to many of its pre-pandemic activities – much of it in-person or hybrid. We gathered for High Holy Days – in our home away from home – like we used to. We brought our menorahs and tested the fire suppression system of our building once again. And we brought back both the Purim Spiel and the full People of the Book Fair!

It's been lovely to see the Sacred Circle dancers, Torah studiers, Lunch and Learners, Hebrew poetry readers, morning discussion group

participants, and Wise Agers gathered in the building again. Our challah bakers, Micah Cooks, and Machon students once again worked their magic and had delightful aromas emitting from our kitchen. And our choir and musicians returned to our sanctuary, filling our hearts with their beautiful sounds.

Outside of our building, Hineni continued to support congregants experiencing a health issue or otherwise in need of moral support. Our Sukkat Shalom group continued our collective efforts to engage beyond Micah and explicitly demonstrate our strong belief in a shared humanity by supporting refugees settled in the DC area with the necessities of a new life as well as the necessities for creating a meaningful life. Our congregation, through Sukkat Shalom's leadership, has also continued funding a HIAS paralegal that supports legal efforts of migrants at our southern border. And our sixth graders once again led our congregation in a collection of underwear, socks, and bras for our neighbors utilizing the support services at Friendship Place.

This year we have also seen the start of new initiatives within the congregation – members who are bringing a greater sense of coherence and meaning to our Jewish Narrative. The new Climate Change & Us group is gathering members interested in approaching the challenges of climate change as a Jewish community. And Beytenu has been helping us feel known as we re-enter our sacred and social spaces. Throughout the year, Beytenu has hosted Onegs and Kiddushes and connected members with volunteer and engagement opportunities. And as a community, we gathered for a week in March to paint five beautiful murals together!

Earlier this year, our community started a genizah this year – a group of congregants ranging from tots to seniors buried sacred texts that were beyond their useful life. Our 5th – 7th graders gathered on Tuesdays to continuing preparing for their b'nai mitzvot while this year also taking

electives in topics such as Improv and Jewish Heroes. A new Drash Mentor program was started, pairing members of our congregation who have professional writing experience with each of our 23 b'nai mitzvah students. The results have been truly remarkable with our b'nai mitzvot delivering their unique and insightful teachings with the confidence of a rabbi. This year also saw the start of a new cohort of adult b'nai mitzvah students!

And as a congregation we challenged ourselves to tackle tough conversations. We continued our racial justice initiative, hosting the CEO of Jews of Color Initiative to speak about the organization's Beyond the Count Report. And our congregation also continued to provide opportunities to discuss our collective and individual relationships with Israel through many talks, protests, and cultural events during the year.

As we shall see in greater detail later this evening, financially we have maintained a balanced budget while keeping fully staffed through this economic turbulence. Your dues and other contributions have been put to good use, supporting our wonderful clergy and staff and allowing them to continue supporting our community in the co-creation of our Jewish lives. Our clergy and staff have maintained our highly engaging worship experiences, and – as we will hear about later – continued to work on our Storefront Project.

Additionally, this year we instituted a change in our building fee – spreading the cost for the maintenance and needed renovation projects for our building across our congregation. I am happy to report that the first year has gone well with over 70% of identified member households contributing to the fund. We are on our way to a sustainable funding structure to ensure that our building can continue to meet our needs for the next 60 years.

As part of our efforts to ensure Temple Micah is still thriving in the future, our board has been working on strengthening the institution.

The board started the year by instituting a formal orientation for new board members. During this orientation we set expectations for Board members, provided an overview of Micah's history and building, introduced the staff, and gave an overview of the activities at Temple Micah. We also introduced the operating budget at this orientation and then did a deep-dive presentation about our finances before our first full meeting of the year.

In addition to tackling a much-needed revision to our By-laws – which we will hear more about later this evening – our board has put in place several new processes and policies to guide our decision-making. This year we began a formal conflict of interest declaration process for Board members. We also now require that each Board Committee be chaired by a Board member to enhance both accountability and communication. And we put in place formal rules for spending board-determined funds.

This year, the Board also started a practice of inviting congregational groups to meet with the board throughout the year. Through these meetings the Board has developed closer relationships with key elements of our congregation such as the Temple Micah Cemetery Trustees – now the Temple Micah Cemetery Committee – and the Micah House Board. Both of these groups play extremely important roles for our community. The Cemetery Committee ensures that our members have access to burial plots in the Mount Lebanon Cemetery. And the wonderful, compassionate members of this committee make sure that Temple Micah supports its members through the passing of a loved one.

The Micah House Board puts our responsibilities to our community in action by seeing to the needs of the women living in Micah House. The hard-working Temple Micah members on the Micah House board take an active role in running the house – from making home repairs to

scheduling programming for its residents. They work closely with our Temple Micah Board Development Committee to ensure that our annual Micah House Walk each May raises the funds needed to meet our commitment to the residents.

As we develop stronger relationships between the lay-leaders of our congregation, we have also started the process of building relationships within the congregational community as whole. The Board commissioned Temple Micah's participation in the Union for Reform Judaism & Clal's Belonging Project. Thank you to the many, many members who took the time to respond to the survey, participate in a follow-up conversation, and to the Board Members, clergy and staff who have attended the series of workshops. We anticipate sharing more about the results throughout the next year.

We also look forward to continuing to work with our Roadmap to become a stronger home. The Board, staff, and clergy will continue to utilize the Roadmap in our work and we will begin flowing it down to Board committees and other congregational groups soon. We have much to look forward to in our near future – we are welcoming a new member of the clergy – Rabbi Healy Slakman as an Assistant Rabbi and Director of Spiritual Arts – and the celebration of our 60th anniversary as a congregation.

Our worship, our study, our socializing, and our support for those in our larger community is all made possible by you, and me, and us. I am excited to see what we collectively can create in the next year as we continue to create our own Jewish Narrative, passionately search for the truth, enable each other to have agency of our faith, sort out what we think about difficult issues, and learn from others about our understanding of American Judaism.

Let me close with some words from our prayer book:

You and I will change the world, you and I. Then all will join us. Though it's been said before it doesn't matter. You and I will change the world. You and I will start from the beginning. It may be difficult, but it doesn't matter.