

Letter from the President

As we welcome in 5779 we also begin a new era at Congregation Beth Israel. Rabbi Abe Lebovic joined us for his first Shabbat service August 4th. He hit it out of the park!

By now I hope you have met Rabbi Abe and are as impressed by him as we are. His voice is beautiful and his knowledge of Judaism extensive. His sermons are inspiring. I am so excited for the High Holidays as Cantor Mark returns and they join forces to create services that are sure to be memorable.

While I know many of you felt uneasy about the recent changes that took place at CBI, the board and I appreciate knowing how much you care. Change is difficult but I promise that most of the things you love about our congregation won't be changing at all. Although we no longer officially classify ourself as "Conservative" we have definitely not abandoned conservative principles. Instead, we plan to simply become more inclusive and welcome the traditions of all Jewish people and denominations.

I'd like to set the record straight about a few rumors I've heard going around.

- 1) The kitchen at CBI won't be kosher. **FALSE...** We have been around for 103 years and while we are no longer strictly conservative, we have a deep tradition that will continue to be upheld.
- 2) CBI is becoming Reform. **FALSE...** We actually hope to become more spiritual as Rabbi Abe comes to us with a deep understanding of the Torah and it's teachings having studied extensively while growing up in an Orthodox home.
- 3) Holiday services will be only one day. **FALSE...** We are not changing our services but we do intend to listen to the majority of the congregation and modify services accordingly, if warranted.
- 4) The board went about things in the wrong way. **FALSE...** This is the most puzzling of all, and quite frankly I'm not really sure what it means. It's the board's job to lead the synagogue. Sometimes that means making tough decisions, and tough times require tough decisions. I applaud them for moving us in the right direction. That is what leadership is about. This is the most transparent board ever at CBI. Previous boards never gave the congregation the opportunity to meet and interview a prospective new Rabbi. They certainly never put it to a vote. Previous boards just made the decision and told the congregation who they hired.

As the high holidays approach, I hope we can put our differences behind us. Let's join together and not look back. I hope those of you who we only see twice a year will be inspired to return more often once you witness the "NEW" CBI. Together we can make this our best year ever.

L'Shana Tova,
Richie