

Annual Report
2017/2018

Dear Friends,

My name is Helen Zipes and I am so proud to be the President of Kehillat Beth Israel and to be able to welcome you all here tonight.

It has been a year since I spoke at our last AGM and told you that I believed we were at a crossroads and that we needed to ensure that Conservative Judaism continues to thrive in Ottawa. I spoke about the legacy we were building here at KBI for our children, grandchildren and future generations to enjoy. I was passionate then about this congregation and am more so now.

I believe we are well on our way to building a new synagogue model that will endure and indeed grow. This has been a very exciting year for our Kehillah – in the words of Rabbi Kenter, we went from “becoming” KBI during amalgamation to “being” KBI and taking our place in the community, as one of the largest Egalitarian Conservative Synagogues in the province and in Canada.

Let’s look at how we are doing in regards to the 3 main goals I set.

1) The first goal was to increase member engagement & programming to meet the needs of our diverse community.

The hiring of our wonderful Cantor Green completed our clergy complement. Under Rabbi Kenter’s direction, he, Rabbi Zuker and Cantor Green have divided up the clerical duties and areas of responsibility to ensure that there is coverage and capacity. Along with our very hard working executive director, Rena Garshowitz, our facilities manager, Susan Grossner our membership officer, Neri Loves, our fundraising professional Laine Lazarovitz, Michelle Hutchinson of our OKFB and the facilities staff, as well as a huge cohort of very dedicated volunteers, we have endeavoured to link with you and to be very responsive to our community’s needs and offer meaningful programming and services.

Just this past month we have enjoyed a family Shabbat Dinner, on Oct 12th, the Scholar in residence, Dr, David Freidenreich Oct 19 - 20, whose Grandmother was in fact Malca Pass, and yesterday’s screening of the film Itzhak. Highlights during the past year of programs included an evening with transgender former Chasid Abby Stein, Disabilities Awareness Month Scholar-in-Residence Weekend with Lauren Tuchman (Feb 2-3) and Acclaimed author and Torah scholar Aviva Zornberg lecture (Apr. 30).

We listened to your feedback and suggestions of where we could improve and have made **Youth and Young Families programming** a priority. Our new Youth Advisor, Dayna Goldfarb, is helping to further stimulate our Kadima Program and USY. In fact, the USY Fall Convention took place right here this weekend.

Youth Programming in the upcoming year, specifically for school age kids, will include **Kehillateinu**, a newly revamped egalitarian Shabbat service run by KBI teens and just for kids every Shabbat and holiday morning; A monthly Family Service on Shabbat mornings – that will be interactive and abridged; And a monthly Family Friday Night Dinner and service. All this in addition to our continuing Tot Shabbats twice a month and Teddy Bear Shabbat every other month.

Cantor Green was able to pull together a very impressive choir for our High Holy Days and I know he has plans to expand this. In the weeks ahead we have many more exciting programs including an evening of Interfaith Music on November 1st, a Yidlife Crisis performance, Nov. 14th, and a lot more.

We are growing as a Kehillah and I am delighted to announce that we have welcomed over 20 new families this past year, including close to ten young singles and couple who have joined the congregation even before the arrival of children.

We, definitely see our role as more than just within these walls though, we see KBI as a **community hub and we have applied for grants for assistance to fund new community programs** that we hope will fill a void in the region. The new programs that Rabbi Kenter will be offering in the coming year include support groups for life challenges such as Bereavement, Navigating infertility and Caregiver support.

Many thanks to David Roytenberg for chairing our Lifelong Learning committee and working to bring many of these programs to fruition.

- 2) **The second goal was to Develop a plan towards financial stability & fundraising.** (at minimum, revenue neutral, income & fundraising cover costs)

Our Board is very mindful of the budget and of costs and is endeavouring to live within our means where possible. However, the reality is that dues only cover approximately 60% of the operating costs of most synagogues, and ours is no exception. Our aging building costs over \$100,000 to upkeep annually.

Therefore, we have organized an **Investment advisory workgroup**, headed by Stephen Saslove, under the Finance committee, to help steward our investments. We have tried to be realistic and pragmatic in our dues setting. This year I formalized a request for decrease in charge to USCJ, which was accepted and we will continue to work with them on this. We carried out a Torah inventory and may look to sell some of our underutilized Torahs as well as some surplus land on our site. Thankfully, the interest from our investments are enough to assure a balanced budget, but increased fundraising will be necessary

Most importantly however, we are launching our **Building our Future campaign**. We will be working together to assure that the Kehillat Beth Israel of 2020 will be a truly new synagogue, with a new design and a contemporary outlook—a dynamic, inclusive approach to Jewish life that will carry our Kehillah forward for generations to come. We will do our part to assure that our congregation is set up for programmatic success and financial stability for years to come.

- 3) **The third goal was to Identify a vision for KBI & the creation of a strategic plan for the next 5 years for continued growth & success within our community.**

To accomplish this goal, I began with our Board of Directors. I decreased the size of the board to allow for better flexibility and adaptability. We introduced **Operating Policy number 7**, Policy

Governance Model, to establish a governance process for KBI whereby the Board of Directors representing the Membership establish, through policy development, the vision for the congregation and the goals to achieve that vision and whereby the Executive Director and staff establish the means to implement the goals while respecting the Executive Director limitations established by this policy. We have held 2 Board advances to ensure our Board is prepared and able to carry out its functions and more training is planned for the future.

I had committed to you that we would be coming to you the membership for guidance, for consultation and for support. Our parlour meetings were opportunities for us to hear what is important to you and what some of your ideas and suggestions are for change.

I committed to you that we would be as transparent and as open with you as possible and share as much with you as we could, in a timely fashion and I hope you feel we have done this – posting minutes, membership of committees on the web, and by providing to you our membership regular and fulsome updates of board and synagogue activities.

We have a well-developed **committee and working group structure** that is charged with making recommendations to the board on all facets of synagogue life including ritual, finance, membership, personnel, and nominating.

Our Building our Future campaign is aimed to maximize the amount of active participation in Jewish life and activity in this community. This includes a building plan that balances our needs, our plans, our goals & our financial realities along with community engagement and programming.

We have updated our shul's operating system to Shulcloud from Chaverware and are expecting this to be able to provide us with more meaningful data, upon which we can depend to make informed and better decisions regarding our membership and programming. We have revamped and modernized our Website and can now accept on-line donations and bookings.

The membership's response to the recent tornado in Ottawa proved what a Kehillah we really are. People came together offering places to stay, meals, freezer space and genuinely looked out for one another.

Our goal at KBI is to make everyone feel comfortable and welcomed regardless of our different backgrounds and practices. Whether you are a traditional family, an interfaith family exploring Jewish experiences, an LGBT family looking for a spiritual home, we are here to form relationships with you and your loved ones and offer meaningful services and programs that will enhance your Jewish identity, increase your understanding of observance and nourish spirituality for your family. We are here to celebrate with you and also support you and your family through all major life events. We are here to form a link to our ancestors and future generations.

I commit to you that in this our second year of my term, we will continue to work with and for you to make Kehillat Beth Israel something of which we can all be proud and which will endure. I thank everyone who has volunteered their time and who has worked so hard with me this past year.

Thank you very much.