

President's Report from Brian Young – Annual Meeting, 2009

For the first time since I began my presidency, I call this meeting to order with great excitement and hope. So much has been going on in the last two years at Fairmount Temple, and now some of the seeds we have planted together are beginning to sprout.

Today we will hear from congregants of many different ages about the volunteer and community building opportunities that have reinvigorated our membership. We will discuss the sweeping changes in our governance that were long overdue, and through the hard work and diligence of a talented group of volunteers, have been formulated and are poised for implementation. We will hear about how Fairmount Temple is once again getting regional and national attention for its social action efforts.

We will also discuss our financial situation, less good news, but it is our responsibility as the stewards of this great institution to take responsible actions in times of hardship.

But even with the limitations imposed by our current economic times, there is much to celebrate here at Fairmount Temple.

The last year has seen many changes in how we work, pray and come together as a community. Our worship renewal efforts have brought an unprecedented number of people together here to pray. Our **Kabbalat Shabbat** service has given us a foundation from which to rebuild all of our worship opportunities as regularly more than 200 of us gather to be together as a synagogue and create a family Shabbat experience we can all enjoy. This success is really the core of our synagogue and the foundation from which all other opportunities for Jewish community are built.

In addition to our worship renewal process, volunteers have also banded together to reach out to each other and to the community at large. Programs like our **Community Kitchen** have touched the lives of over 200 congregants since its inception. Politically, our **Social Action Committee** has been involved in efforts in Lorain to effect the rebuilding of that community and to join with other religious institutions in calling for secular change to benefit those people. Our **Habitat for Humanity** group has been active in building homes for those affected by climate, both economic and weather, working with a fundamentally Christian group to insure a place for Jews to be able to help in this most worthwhile effort. None of our social action volunteers let obstacles stand in their way as our **Congregational Based Community Organizers** have been meeting in different locations, with different groups of people to determine the key issues of our times. A spin off of this effort, the **Economic Crisis Task Force** is gathering a growing group of volunteers to address both immediate and long term concerns of our congregants and others in the Cleveland area as we strive to create a communications channel for opportunities, and a delivery mechanism of services for those in need. Additionally, under the umbrella of social action or caring community, we have developed a committee who calls themselves the **Green Team**. This group of impassioned volunteers is concerned with our footprint on our earth and our sustainability issues. Due to their efforts, the synagogue has launched a rather full menu of options for our population to recycle paper, and plastics in many forms and quality ranges. The addition of paper recycling has actually reduced the temple's bill

for waste removal and allowed us to achieve cash savings, better service and less stress on our environment. We have a lot to celebrate.

This year a new caring community program was launched and seems to be growing even as it is just being initiated now. The **chavurah** program has brought differing groups of congregants together for social, learning, and prayer opportunities. Bringing people together from this large congregation is another way in which we are growing stronger from our roots out, reminding people that their synagogue is where their friends are, and that they have a special bond with each other.

In the arena of **Lifelong Learning**, our study programs have never been as diverse, creative and attuned to today's needs as they are today. From our adult education opportunities, Women's Study Group, Monday Night Learning, Wake up Wednesday Morning, Downtown Lunch and Learn, and Adult B'nai Mitzvah classes, our offerings are many and varied to suit our large number of requests.

The **Religious School** is also taking a comprehensive look at our offerings and making changes to meet today's families' needs. The continued growth of our parent child program, the largest in Cleveland, illustrates the need for options to traditional midweek Hebrew offerings. The partnering of a parent and a child in study is a new and interesting arena, one in which we continue to improve both the offerings for the children and the parents as well. The clergy are involved in the parent education piece of this program for yet another opportunity for connection. Our educational retreat program is considered the premier experiential learning opportunity in the city by the JECC. We continue to invest in this program as its effects are felt in our younger congregants for the rest of their lives. One unique program only offered at Fairmount Temple is our Hebrew Immersion Camp, *Machane Ivri*. We are the only agency to offer a summer camp offering camp experience, swimming, field trips, etc., along with conversational Hebrew training and experience. This growing camp is offered to the community and is also one of the seeds that is "sprouting".

Our **Early Childhood Center** remains one of the largest programs of its kind in the city, offering the most opportunities for enrichment and unity within its parent population. For many years now our pre-school has attracted a diverse, committed group of families, many of whom join the synagogue during this experience.

Our financial situation, as we will discuss later in the program, is that our endowment, which is secure and growing, did not generate income as it has in the past. We have undertaken many efforts to decrease spending and have provided the congregation not only with a balanced budget for this past year – but are in the process of proposing a balanced budget based on extremely conservative estimates for next year. To be sure, this has not been easy-but with the support of all of the staff, lay leaders and you, our congregants we will be successful.

Now, what you probably have all been waiting for me talk about. At last, after over a year of very careful self - examination, interviews with many congregants, staff and professionals from around the country, and an extensive search and interview process, I am pleased to announce that **Rabbi Robert Nosanchuk** will be joining us as senior rabbi in July 2010.

Rabbi Nosanchuk, currently Senior Rabbi at Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation, a 500 member congregation, in Reston Virginia, is one of the rising stars in the reform rabbinical movement today. Prior to his current pulpit he was an associate rabbi at Baltimore Hebrew, a 1500 member Congregation.

Rabbi Nosanchuk grew up in Detroit and is married to Joanie Berger who grew up right here in Shaker Heights. They are the proud parents of two young children.

On behalf of the search committee and leadership, let me say how excited I am to have Rabbi Nosanchuk join us. Thank you to the Search Committee, co-chaired by Amy Garnitz and Mort Levin, for overseeing this process. This Committee included, in addition to myself, Jeff Blank, Peter Brosse, Marcel Duhamel, Jim Levine, Marguerite Morris, Karen Leizman Moses, Julie Raskind, Steve Schlein, Will Sukenik, Penni Weinberg, and Marcia Wexberg.

I want to add that there will be several opportunities for all of you to meet Rabbi Nosanchuk over the next year. I am sure that you will all join me in welcoming him to Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple. Look for more information about Rabbi Nosanchuk in your July *Bulletin*.

All of what I just talked about could not have been achieved without the support of so many people, including Rabbis Kalfus and Caruso; Cantor Sager; Shea Waldron and the whole administrative staff; the officers and board of directors and of course all of you. I am honored to serve as your president and look forward to the coming year.

In closing, I think you will agree that we have accomplished so much together this year. Our synagogue is succeeding on so many forefronts; our congregants are enjoying each others company and their association with Fairmount Temple in ways that we have not seen for some time. May we continue to grow from strength to strength – *cain y'hee ratzohn*.

Brian Young, President