

Cantor Vera Broekhuysen
Annual Report
May 6, 2018

Dear chevre,

As the spring sun (finally!) warms us up, I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on the past year for our Annual Meeting. This has been a year of strong partnerships, internally and externally, which set us up well for future years of strength and development.

Within the Temple, our professional staff – Nancy LaFleur, Debbi Levasseur, Cheryl Hill, Sheila Brown and Don Kumis – keep our Temple's services, school, finances and day-to-day business running like clockwork, spick-and-span, and let our community know the important information in timely and loving fashion. They are an unbeatable team. Our President Larry Cann, our Board of Directors, and the devoted chairs and members of our myriad committees, steer and educate and minister to us. Our outgoing interim specialist, Rabbi Ilene Bogosian, has guided us with deep commitment and grace during our search for a new settled spiritual leader, and we will miss her dearly. We are lucky in our people.

Our Temple enjoys exciting partnerships, both old and new, with our local interfaith community. As part of the Merrimack Valley Interfaith Sanctuary Network, our members join with other Christian, Jewish and Unitarian Universalist communities of faith from Amesbury to Acton. Together we advocate for the basic human dignity of peaceful, hardworking immigrants in our communities, supporting their rights to remain with their families and in a place of safety. We are also blessed in our ongoing partnership with Bradford Christian Academy. Their choir joined forces and voices with us and Calvary Baptist Church's Sanctuary Choir for our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Gospel Shabbat service. Shared rehearsal for all three choirs allowed us to get to know one another as well as the music: an experience we aim to repeat. I appreciate our partnership with Calvary – the inimitable spirit and musicianship of their Music Director, Joe Devoe, and the church community's friendship in joining us year after year to celebrate MLK in our Temple home. I look forward very much to developing a relationship with their own new settled Pastor, Reverend Kenneth Young, whose installation I was privileged to attend last month. I know that we can become an even stronger community, in this coming year, for our interfaith neighbours and for our own members in interfaith relationships, all of which add richness and joy to our Temple life.

As we look to what this upcoming year will offer our community ritually, fresh possibilities beckon. Our monthly Reform-style Shabbat morning service from Mishkan T'filah continue; we are also adding six Shabbat evening services throughout the year. One of the great joys of my cantorial life is teaching trope, the melodic punctuation system for our holy texts. In addition to our two wonderful bar mitzvah celebrants this year (Mike Shnidman Jr. and Ben Thomas), I taught an adult trope class this spring. I hope you'll all come out to support and celebrate our graduates (Scott Hannula, Jay Harris, Sandra Kassin-Deardorff, Rachel Kurshan, Allison Rudman, and Eva Valentine) on May 19th and June 2nd as they *leyn* (chant from the scroll) and translate Torah for our community. We will offer another adult trope class this upcoming year, so if you are excited to get more intimately acquainted with the text and melodies of Torah (and are comfortable reading punctuated Hebrew), please consider signing up! We also plan to offer a class this summer for anyone interested in leading *shiva minyanim*, services in the homes of mourners that enable them to say Kaddish for their loved ones in the immediate aftermath of grief, surrounded by friends and family. You may wonder if I'm teaching myself out of a job, but far from it! I believe that the more our members feel empowered to chant, to

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lead (or co-lead) services and parts of services, and to speak the Torah of their own souls, the better for all of us. I'm excited for our community's lay ritual leadership to expand in the coming year.

Musically, it's been a fantastic year at our Temple. Our Temple Emanu-El Makheila continues to hone our harmonies and expand our repertoire, often accompanied by our wonderful pianist David Collins. This year, our choir members included Martha Chazanoff, Stacy Karlin-Smith, Sandra Kassin-Deardorff, Rachel Hanson, Alex Hogan, Phil Platcow, Tirzah Shalek and Susan Shwom. For our 2018-2019 season, in addition to the High Holy Days, MLK Gospel Shabbat and Yom HaSho'ah, we'll have the option of choral sound at some of our new Shabbat evening services and Confirmation. We are always glad to welcome new (or returning) voices!

I am grateful that the Temple has established a Cantor's Discretionary Fund this year. Your donations to this fund can help support musical programs at the Temple, including through bringing in outside talent, purchasing musical instruments, and extra accompaniment time for the choir.

In religious school, our students mastered songs in Ladino, Yiddish, Hebrew and English, writing lyrics together and learning how to harness the voice of a drum. Alex Hogan and Max Gofstein have been my brilliant musical *madrichim*, teaching assistants, from whose energy and skills both the students and I have benefited. Next spring, the Temple will welcome renowned Jewish musician and early childhood educator Ellen Allard as our artist-in-residence for a Saturday evening concert and Sunday morning teaching session and open song session at our Religious School. Our kids already know some of her great songs, but Ellen in person is nothing short of magical. Come to hear, learn and enjoy! And if you are moved to support Ellen's visit financially, please talk to me or to Debbi.

I look at our Temple and I am awed by the wealth of energy, initiative, dedication and affection that each of our members and staff bring through our doors every day, and the depth and texture of the Jewish engagement that we take back out to share in the world. Our present is excellent. Our potential is unbounded. It is truly a privilege to serve this community. In the coming years I look forward to our working all together - members, staff and clergy - to grow our congregational capacity for member-led leading and leyning; to welcome and integrate interfaith families more fully; and to continue to both bring in and also to go out and meet, our wider Greater Haverhill community for shared celebration and education and service. *Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazek* – may we move together from strength to strength.

L'shalom,
- Cantor Vera