

# Presidential Message

December 2019

In October, my daughter Amanda performed in the Waterford High School Drama presentation of the Diary of Anne Frank. Amanda played the role of Anne for the three performances. I want to thank those from our congregation who attended. Many of you have known Amanda since she was a baby. My family truly appreciates your support throughout all of these years, and through the milestones. We also appreciate those from Beth El who were in attendance. The play is universal to all Jews. The community support was a blessing.

The young adult actors were excellent, with the audience losing the fact that the actors were teenagers as they expertly portrayed the roles of older adults. Watching the play was quite difficult for me. My daughter became Anne Frank, and I knew that Anne was going to die in the holocaust. Anne Frank could have been my daughter, or any of our daughters. This brought me to tears each night.

One of the characters in the play that I found of particular interest was Albert Dussel (real name Fritz Pfeffer). I believe he had a line describing that his grandfather, father and he were all born in the Netherlands and he just thought of himself as a citizen. Mr. Dussel didn't come across as a practicing Jew and didn't even know Hanukkah traditions. However, to the Nazis, he was still a Jew. Mr Dussel died in the holocaust. No matter how we choose to identify within our Judaism (if at all), we are singularly Jewish to everyone else.

Moving on to activities of the Board;

Carin Savel, the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Eastern CT, presented to the Board a vision for creating a Jewish campus centered around Temple Emanu-El. There is a parcel of land behind the sheds, on the school side, that could be acquired and used to erect a new building that would house JFEC, create meeting and other rooms, and whatever else can come to the community's imagination. In one really visionary approach, a Jewish senior center and senior housing could be part of the campus. The idea would be to centralize Jewish life for our region. This concept was presented to the Boards of JFEC, Beth-El and Emanu-El at separate meetings. All three Boards separately agreed that the vision is worth pursuing.

Financially, we received another gift from a benefactor family of which some of the funds went towards increasing the compensation of our teaching faculty, staff and the assistants. Those who have been working to make our school the gem of Jewish life were underpaid for what they do. This was indeed a blessing.

While we have had monumental contributions from our benefactor families that have paid off our mortgage, repaired the heating and air conditioning, provided building security, improved the school and more, member dues are tracking below what we need to meet the dues component of the budget.

As I spoke of at the annual meeting, I am not going to approve mid-year requests to be sent to the congregation for additional dues contributions. I will simply try to provide the actual data for your review. Working with what we can fiscally control, it will be the responsibility of the Board to find a way to ensure financial stability at the end of each year.

One thing to consider is that this is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the congregation. We hope to reflect this at the Starry Night Gala this June. If we can make that event larger in attendance than ever, that will go a long way to shoring up the dues shortfall. When the time comes, invite friends and family.

As a final note, the Artist in Residence weekend was just amazing. There was so much ruach, joy, and togetherness. I hope you had a chance to participate.

Jonathan